



SANTINIKETAN  
LIBRARY

Class No.. 824

Author No.. G.87-

Shelf No.....

Accession No.....





# The Humour of the Underman

*The Works of Francis Grierson*

---

THE INVINCIBLE ALLIANCE

THE VALLEY OF SHADOWS

THE CELTIC TEMPERAMENT

MODERN MYSTICISM

PARISIAN PORTRAITS

THE HUMOUR OF THE UNDERMAN

LA VIE ET LES HOMMES (IN FRENCH)

---

London : John Lane, The Bodley Head  
New York : John Lane Company

# The Humour of the Underman

And Other Essays

By

Francis Grierson

London: John Lane, The Bodley Head

New York: John Lane Company

Toronto: Bell & Cockburn

MCMXIII

*Second Edition*

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE HUMOUR OF THE UNDERMAN .	7
THE WAGNERIAN RIDDLE .	14
THE PAST AND PRESENT . . .	26
THE SOCIAL HALF-WAY HOUSE . .	31
MARAT AND ROBESPIERRE . .	40
IN SANTA CROCE . . .	50
THE EMOTIONAL POWER OF GENIUS	62
EQUALITY AND OPPORTUNITY	73
PSYCHIC PARALLELS . . .	79
NIETZSCHE AND WAGNER .	90
THE SYMPOSIUM ON ENDOWMENT	100
ABRAHAM LINCOLN . . .	107
THE MAKING OF BOOKS . . .	122
FEELING AND INTELLECT . . .	141
MEMORABLE EXPRESSIONS . . .	150
IMPRESSIONISM . . .	157
THE CLASSICAL AND THE CRITICAL	153
MYSTERY AND ILLUSION . . .	169
ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY .	176





## THE HUMOUR OF THE UNDERMAN

THERE is a humour of the *Uebermensch*, or Superman, which is direct, axiomatic, and self-assertive ; it springs from knowledge and intuition, as in Shakespeare and Nietzsche, often reasoned, full of a certain moral significance, ironical, sarcastic, and even cynical. It stands for the consciousness of intellectual power ; it is personal. But the humour of Uncle Remus is impersonal, for it represents the underworld of the Underman, without a conscious philosophy and without applied art. In the hands of the great poets and writers humour is allied to criticism. In the stories of Uncle Remus humour is untrammelled by learning and unfettered by ordinary rules of ethics. The unfathomable charm lies in simplicity and naturalness, in

## 8 ' HUMOUR OF THE UNDERMAN

the relation established between the mind of the ignorant Underman and the primitive things of the natural world.

There are moods which become identical with Nature. A tree in leaf, a flower in bloom, is Nature in dreamland ; but the poet is one who gives a form to a mood, and interprets the dreams. In the stories of the negro, as told in Uncle Remus, instinct takes the place of reason. In his hands instinct grapples with mystery, and artlessness fills the place of art. It is here that the Underman rises to the plane of the Overman. The higher we go in the realm of words the simpler the words and expressions become. In the supremest moments in all poetry and prose art is drowned in instinct. Wonder and emotion rise to the surface with the impulsion of a cork to the top of a troubled sea. Simplicity of mind becomes identified with the mysteries of natural things, and the immanence of the instinctive mood renders ingenuity impossible and reason superfluous. At such moments the soul has neither the time nor the inclination to reason about conventions of art ; the instinct is swift and the words brief. Simple emotion makes

## HUMOUR OF THE UNDERMAN 9

Hamlet say: "Oh, that this too, too solid flesh would melt!" There would be no instinctive charm if he made use of the words: "Oh, that this materialistic flesh would dissolve and evaporate." Words of more than three syllables are fatal to direct and simple emotions, but in much of the greatest prose and poetry words of one syllable evoke the most potent charm and the most haunting images. The shortest words are closest to Nature, the longest pertain to philosophy and science. Pedantry makes naivety impossible, and philosophy makes reason a bore. The primitive words were created in obedience to a natural law in the world of sound. The first words were invented to imitate noises and musical tones; with them came expressions of want, fear, instinctive desires and feelings. The long words came with the first metaphysicians, and modern science added to the list by bringing into poetry a vocabulary of hard, unsympathetic, and often meaningless expressions. There is such a thing as poetic science, but no such thing as scientific poetry. Materialism, scepticism, philosophic doubt, scientific vapourings, have done their

## 10 HUMOUR OF THE UNDERMAN

utmost to make the true poetic mood impossible.

Most of the vital words belong to the primitive world of sentiment and sensation, and this is why dialect is always more intimate and insinuating than classical prose. "Put your ear to the earth," says Lamennais, "and you will feel the throbbing of the world"; and this is what the Underman has done in the stories of Uncle Remus. The people of Nature's world hear the right sound and sense the right mood; the interpretation is simple, direct, naive, agreeing with the habits, the humour, and the cunning of the animals of the same world; for the negro, left to himself, without any schooling, is, or was, the most entertaining of humorists, because the most natural and the most unconscious. He lives with his finger on the pulse of Nature. With learning, humour becomes strained or cynical. Uncle Remus is as wily as Brer Fox and as simple as Brer Rabbit. His humours, fears, interpretations, and superstitions contain all the sensuous wisdom of the underworld, as when he says: "Come down to dat, Brer Ab, dere ain't nuffin' dat ain't cu'us." He sounds the note of universal

## HUMOUR OF THE UNDERMAN 11

philosophy, the note that made Aristotle a profound observer of the seeming little things in order to understand some of the apparent great ones. At the head as well as at the foot of human nature the impulse of curiosity is the dominant factor. Indeed, the saying, "There is nothing that is not curious," is the beginning of Aristotelian science and the end of Shakespearean philosophy. It is the all in all; here the Overlord descends to the level of the Underman, and the philosophical seer is no nearer Nature than Uncle Remus in all his ignorance and seeming blindness. Uncle Remus and his kin are close observers of natural things, the things our superficial scientists overlook as insignificant or without meaning; for science, in our day, has, in a large measure, skipped the alphabet of life to arrive at a vocabulary of negatives. Men fail in business, in science, in art, in religion, as soon as they skip the small things to grasp the bulky. Greatness does not consist in bulk. It was the inverted idea of greatness that made Napoleon Bonaparte, the first *Uebermensch* of modern politics, lose his crown, Bismarck his prestige, and Nietzsche his reason.

## 12 HUMOUR OF THE UNDERMAN

What these Overlords needed was a little of Brer Rabbit's wisdom—namely, “to lie low an' say nuffin'”—that is, after they had attained the attainable. Ambition at the intellectual top is far more dangerous than superstition at the illiterate bottom. There is plenty of superstition in Uncle Remus, but it is delightful and harmless, and certainly there is nothing delightful in the agonies of Napoleon, the humiliation of Bismarck, and the disease of Nietzsche. In the realm of mystery the Underman is the peer of Hamlet in the grave scene, and in the same predicament as Macbeth in the presence of the witches. Uncle Remus says he “despises fer ter heah dogs a-howlin' an' squinch owls havin' de ague, out in de woods,” and that these things make his “bones cold and his flesh creep.” Even the redoubtable Lady Macbeth halts on the threshold and listens to the owl's scream. At such times the phantasmagoria of the night crowd into one brief moment, stars and planets are forgotten, celestial symbols give place to portents of the earth, the bosom of the underworld begins to heave, Nature assumes a voice, every sound becomes prophetic, in the moon-

*HUMOUR OF THE UNDERMAN 13*

light of the imagination the curtains of mystery sway and shift, a realm of the mind is disclosed beyond the limits of category, a world without the semblance of a name and without the quality of number.



## THE WAGNERIAN RIDDLE

IN the beginning there was an unrest in all Wagner's music, huge and heaving as the ocean itself, depicted with appalling realism in the overture to the *Flying Dutchman*, merciless, overpowering, yet intended only for the born musician. This unrest was accentuated more and more in each succeeding work. In *Lohengrin* it is the melancholy of mythical romance; in *Tannhäuser* it is the melancholy of religious romance; in *Tristan* the fatal influence of passion and romance; in *Parsifal* a strange mixture of mysticism, passion, and romance; in the *Ring* it is passion rising to unheard-of climaxes, a series of battles in which nothing is absolutely plain and nobody absolutely secure. It comes nearer to being Schopenhauer set to music than anything else one can imagine, and the

## THE WAGNERIAN RIDDLE 15

impeccable scoring of the musician might be set side by side with the impeccable style and logic of the great pessimist. Wagner pushed passion and romance to the last limit of artistic perfection, making despair triumphant in *Tristan* and *Lohengrin*, elsewhere depicting a restlessness the like of which no one had even imagined before his day. With a wand of enchantment he created a vast realm of romantic and mediaeval mysteries which unrolled before the astonished world in all the magic of mingled sight and sound, causing the puppets of myth to live and move in a phantasmagoria of mystery at a time when Germany was just entering upon a far-reaching epoch of materialism backed by a bulwark of militarism. And just as this giant of polyphonic harmony was about to conquer the musical world, Ibsen was looming above the Scandinavian horizon with a rude and trenchant realism such as had not been known since the time when Euripides purged the Athenians of all their optimistic illusions in a long and final triumph of tears. And thus we have seen, in our own day, the most marvellous manifestation of divergent genius ever manifest in the short space of three

## 16 THE WAGNERIAN RIDDLE

decades : Wagner in musical mysticism, Ibsen in dramatic realism, and Bismarck in the iron yoke of militarism.

Wagner wielded the supremest wand of all the modern magicians, yet he exercised but a negative influence in the world of opinions and ideas. How, it may be asked, was his influence so subtle and yet so shallow? How did it come about that all Germany 'was steeped in the music of *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, and *Parsifal* at a time when the Germans had but one united purpose, to become impregnable as a military nation? The answer is, Wagner's genius dealt in past myth and past tradition; he produced positive sensations but futile ideas. In his music the nerves are always touched or thrilled, the mind made restless, and the soul left hungry. Imagination coupled to marvellous nervous energy, were the dominant factors in the musician's life and work. And, like cause, like effect. In general, Wagner's scoring may be likened to the perpetual casting and re-casting of sea-waves under a steady breeze, and his nuances the shadows cast by a setting sun or by moonlight, the constant agitation and emotion offering no

## THE WAGNERIAN RIDDLE 17

rest even to the stormy petrel of his own genius.

Perhaps the most curious thing about his dramas is the incontrovertible fact that while his audiences may be profoundly moved by the music they always remain indifferent to the moral. And yet no musician ever tried so hard to imprint the seal of a moral lesson on his hearers ; his failure here proves once and for all how vain it is to look to romance and imagination for a moral basis of action.

Wagner's music is a music without hope. It is not the music that could call a nation to arms, or pacify a mob, or revive a languishing people to religious life, or console the sick in their last hour. We have to sum up the work of a man of genius by considering the dominant tone and influence of the major part of his work, and it is clearly idle to bring forward bits of *Parsifal* and other works as perfect specimens of religious and optimistic inspiration. It is not these short pages that have secured Wagner his great audiences. On the contrary, it is the power, vehemence, and passion of all his work taken from first to last.

At a time when Prussia had become the

## 18 THE WAGNERIAN RIDDLE

chief seat of scientific scepticism, the musician-poet was at work creating a whole world of mystery and illusion. When Bismarck founded the German Empire, the nation had no offset to materialism and militarism. It required a veritable Titan to hold the balance to the side of poetry, music, and art, for poetry and art alone would not suffice; an opiate of enchantment had to be administered by a master-physician skilled in the art of drugging the senses. Sound, colour, movement, gesture, were all united in one mighty ensemble, and the result was a mingling of Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, and mediaeval Germany. Victor Hugo never achieved anything equal to certain antithetical scenes of the music-dramas. *Tannhauser* opens with a saturnalia and ends with a long procession of saints. All this had to be accomplished by one man, for one country, for a particular epoch. Yet, although the dramas were intended for the German people and the German temperament, curiously enough the day was to come when the French would appropriate them to their own benefit. In the music there was a universal distraction. It kept the French mind from brooding over

## THE WAGNERIAN RIDDLE 19

the lost limb which Bismarck tore from the crushed body of France at the taking of Sedan. For, be it noted, France, previous to the battle of Sedan, was a nation rich in optimistic security. When the French awoke from their long dream it was to live in a twilight of pessimistic insecurity, and what could be more congenial to the state of the patients' minds than the music and poetry of the *Twilight of the Gods*, the sad melody in the bridal procession of *Lohengrin*, the fierce agonies of *Parsifal*, the vehement *Ride of the Walkyries*? Here again poetry was impotent. The Parisian nerves required a new stimulant something like the mingling of champagne with the nepenthe of absinthe, and the music-dramas proved veritable music-drams.

Violent fevers never last long, and the day of reaction came. The Germans began to regard Bayreuth as a pleasant place for a holiday, while the French began to neglect Wagner's music as soon as they felt the reviving effects of a new scientific and philosophical optimism. And London? How was it possible to engraft the Wagnerian cult on the London public? How was it possible for a

## 20 THE WAGNERIAN RIDDLE

people nourished on the languid and listless airs of Handel to relish the volcanic fury and suave symbolical meanings of Wagner? It is no joke to say that the music-dramas have been popularised in England by the most popular joker in London to-day. We have the key to the mystery in Mr Bernard Shaw's *The Perfect Wagnerite*. The crowd, who know no more about the real beauties of romantic and mystical music than they know about Virgil's Latin, took Mr Shaw seriously because they concluded that, although he could joke about Socialism, it would be out of all reason to expect him to carry persiflage and paradox into the realms of music. They snatched at the bait ; they found the entertainment well worth the money from a sensational and spectacular point of view, while not a few imagined they had attained the highest philosophical summit when they were able to say they had witnessed the whole of the *Ring* ; they would then discuss and explain the symbols without so much as a hint at the music, good or bad. Thus, while the French enjoyed the subtle beauties of Wagner's music, the London audiences flatter themselves that they understand what the dramas

## THE WAGNERIAN RIDDLE 21

are all about ; the thing is all plain enough when you possess the key.

Wagner's dramas attracted in many ways : for the lover of Nature there was the rippling of water, the rising and setting of sun and moon, the shimmering glow of soft and supernatural twilights ; for the lover of melodrama, manoeuvres, quarrels, battles, terrible encounters between god-like warriors ; for the religious mystic, perpetual conflict between vice and virtue, angelic inspiration and demonic artifice ; for the musician, a nameless ocean of heaving tone-waves over whose shifting surface flitted the Phantom Ship of lost illusions, the Flying Dutchman of destiny and despair. The Phantom Ship stood in the very beginning as the key to the Wagnerian melancholy. Wagner was the result of the Napoleonic upheavals ; the contemporary of Schopenhauer, Heine, and Alfred de Musset, children of disillusionment and intellectual pessimism. With Wagner and his great contemporaries action took a negative form—it belonged to the realm of imagination, and even Ibsen was not so much a builder as an intellectual dissolvent.

Great men often become popular at last,



## 22 THE WAGNERIAN RIDDLE

not because of their powers but because of their eccentricities and weaknesses. There is scarcely a popular man of genius whose popularity has not been gained through his lightest and most superficial work. Goethe's one popular book was his *Werther*, the book which the public itself let slip into oblivion.

The popularity of Wagner can only be accounted for on the score of his weakness. The crowd seized on what was vulgar, blatant, and ridiculous—the long and impossible death of Amfortas, the idiotic attitude of Parsifal, anticlimax and inartistic repetitions. Side by side with pure inspiration and impeccable ensembles we have a coarseness and crudeness which shock the taste and offend the ear, and yet the “True Wagnerian” pretends to accept all in a lump.

The lack of humour was Wagner's greatest defect. No man with a sense of humour could have written *Parsifal*. He could be vehement and sarcastic, pathetic and sentimental, but he was a stranger to wit and humour. Compare the brightest and the gayest parts of the music-dramas with even the dullest parts of Mozart, and the difference is like that between ordinary Rhine-wine and

champagne. The humour in the *Meister-singer* resembles bombast compared with that in *Don Giovanni* and *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and nowhere in Wagner is there anything comparable with the sparkling and suave humour of Verdi's *Falstaff*. And it is just this lack of humour in Wagner that the public cannot realise.

As for the popularity of Wagner in the concert-room, the case is different. Here the composer is heard at his best because there is neither time nor place for the unspeakable boredom of Wagner at his worst. This phase of his popularity is no doubt sincere, although in London the Wagnerian concerts are patronised largely by foreigners.

To pass from Wagner as artist and musician to Wagner as thinker and philosopher is to pass from a realm of imagination and sensuous enjoyment to a world in which practical action is totally wanting. Wagner's mission was to fill the immense void left in the world of ideal sensation by the onslaught of Napoleon. When Napoleon swept away the last vestiges of romantic feudalism he left a chasm between the old and the new that could only be bridged by a combination of

## 24 THE WAGNERIAN RIDDLE

poetry and music, in the structure of which philosophy and common-sense appeared as mere props and not as arches; but the time came when the props fell to pieces, and the bridge appeared in the air as a rainbow symbolising anything the beholder pleased to infer or imagine.

The material side of Germany has not been acted upon by Wagner's genius. 'All who have lived in Berlin know how the great composer's ideals and teachings have been ignored by the ruling classes. The truth is, Wagner's music-dramas came as a nervous and negative reaction after the long and mighty strain that began with the French Revolution and ended with the defeat of Napoleon. After the titanic struggle of real men on the solid earth, the combat of spiritual hosts in the clouds; after the triumphs of real heroes, the illusions and dreams of ideal powers and phantom warriors. It was to be expected that Nature would somehow strike a balance between violence in real life and violence in the sphere of imagination.

To sum up, the chief reason for the decadence of Wagnerian art in Anglo-Saxon

countries may be found in the fact that we are at the beginning of a long period of optimism. A people who are being schooled in the philosophy of optimistic suggestion will refuse to be influenced by the negative and lowering moods of the greater part of Wagner's music. The suggestive power of *Lohengrin* and *Tannhauser* is little short of deadly, to say nothing of the demoralisation set up in the sensitive listener by a full dramatic representation of *Tristan*. The time is at hand when music will be used to heal the mind and comfort the heart instead of to fill the mind with melancholy and distract the imagination.

## THE PAST AND PRESENT

ONE of the gravest dangers to an active and practical life is to become obsessed by the charm and personality of dead authors. When this happens a writer becomes, willingly or unwillingly, an enemy of young people with original talent. A man might as well say to his friends: "I am sorry I cannot invite you to visit me, but you see all my spare rooms are occupied by mummies."

It is this attitude that has caused the hail of epigrammatic arrows about Shakespeare and other idols, some of them tipped with vitriol and aimed, not at the innocent mummies, but at their worshippers.

There are writers and thinkers in the world as great as any that ever lived, and to advise the reading of books by dead authors only is to advise a retirement from all active interest

in life. Such advice, if followed, would mean a rapid descent towards intellectual impotence. A man who has ceased to take an interest in contemporary literature admits his incapacity to deal with vital questions; he is in the grip of old age; there is no more certain sign of mental decrepitude than chronic denial.

Genius is the capacity, not for taking pains, but for feeling young. The highest kind of genius expresses the fullest mental maturity through a medium of powerful and perennial emotions. "Goethe," says Eckermann, "was a boy all his life."

Thoughts are not always attractive when expressed by a mind which can only see things in a "dry light." The truth is, Bacon, who saw things in a dry light, was never a young man, as Goethe was never an old one. This explains why Bacon never got beyond a worldly wisdom which, most of the time, hovers about the borders of the matter-of-fact and the obvious. In the highest arts the vital question is always, "How do you feel?" not "How do you think?" According to Plato, ideas rule the world; but a hundred Platos, armed with ideas, would stand no

## 28 THE PAST AND PRESENT

chance beside a silver-tongued orator talking to the people for five minutes about their homes and their country in time of danger.

There are intellectual as well as hysterical diseases, but the intellectual mania is by far the most inveterate, the most disagreeable, and the most dangerous. All intellectual movements arrive at a period when the normal flow of action or reaction becomes suddenly hard and strained, and it is then that epigram degenerates into cynicism. It is then that people flock to places where humour mellows and tones the mind, and where naive laughter establishes an equilibrium between the desperation of fanaticism and the despair of pessimism. The instinct is to make fun of nightmares, joke with destiny, and pat misfortune on the back. The people then become instruments in the hands of a mighty and subconscious reaction without which the world would soon go mad. Humour is the universal antidote for cynicism, as it is for the poison of envy and the petty spite of jealousy. The lack of it has been the ruin of Tolstoy. For twenty years he has been trying to walk the tight-rope in the amphitheatre of Russian politics, and has

never, in spite of the clapping of a million hands, succeeded in reaching the other side. His balance-pole is wrong. It is loaded with lead at one end. Even in his early life he resembled an angry old man in a country where young people lack the feeling of youth and the old ones the efficacy of experience and wisdom.

And yet no wise man has ever told more than the half of what he knows. And truth itself is sometimes like a ruddy apple which requires to be cut in halves before we can tell which portion contains the worm.

When Ruskin lost the buoyancy of youth, which was after the immortal creation of *Modern Painters*, the fixed idea took the place of the creative instinct; he became chronically angry and, like Tolstoy, he anathematised both the flesh-pots of Egypt and the ink-pots of critics.

Now and then a thinker makes his appearance whose scales of discrimination are so nicely adjusted that the four principal kinds of cynicism are weighed and judged with ease and precision, youthful to the last amidst the ruin wrought by the Macchia-vellis in politics, the Voltaires in religion,



### 30 *THE PAST AND PRESENT*

*the Schopenhauers in philosophy, and the Haeckels in science. The secret of perennial youth and perpetual wisdom is never to take an active part in the fuss made by passing isms and the fantasies created by ephemeral passions.*

## THE SOCIAL HALF-WAY HOUSE

THE half-way house in the social world resembles the half-way house on the mountain side: it is a place where fatigue begins and danger increases. For the climber who wishes to reach the summit the worst of the journey is yet to come. One of the characteristics of this house is that it looks towards the summit, yet all who enter remain at the same social altitude until they return to the normal realities by the route they came. It is a hot-bed of illusions. The mistress of this house, as well as the habitués, make a fascinating study for all who are interested in paradox and enigma; for here, in some mysterious way, people are supposed to succeed where the mistress has always failed. The habitués are supposed to pass

## 32 SOCIAL HALF-WAY HOUSE

on to a point which overlooks, and even commands, the movements of ordinary people and events. Here it is always "to-morrow and to-morrow." If there be a variant to the phrase, it is an allusion to yesterday. The one thing that never happens is a satisfactory termination of the present.

In society the half-way house has its *raison d'être* in the peculiar mental temperament of its mistress. She is a person who lacks some power or combination of powers, some talent or combination of talents, to attain a place on or near the social summit. She conforms to social routine; is, of course, lacking in originality; seldom makes an independent move, for fear of being compromised; is ever on the alert, like a nervous pilot in shallow soundings, backs water at the slightest suspicion of danger; has but one definite aim—to keep afloat, to skim the surface of the world, all sails spread with illusions, and pass gently down the social stream (not up) on a current which eludes its squalls and avoids its squalor. For the mistress has long since abandoned the notion of going against the tide, of taking absurd risks. These things are left to the novice,

## SOCIAL HALF-WAY HOUSE 33

the casual guest, the habitual visitor. The house exists, not so much from lack of means to dare and to do, as from lack of moral courage to be simple and sincere. Without insincerity there would be no social half-way houses.

In all great capitals there are thousands of persons who aspire to an atmosphere of art and intellect, and many of these join the crowds which flow through the open door. For this reason the place constitutes a trap for the tyro and a bait for the over-ambitious. Still, the bait seems as tempting to the delicate trout as to the eager gudgeon ; all are supposed to nibble once.

But it is at dinner the saddest disillusion occurs. A dinner is given to meet so-and so, and the repast, like the house itself, is spread midway between luxury and necessity on a plane of illusions, in appearance as solid as adamant. All goes well until the champagne arrives—for with it comes the supreme test of the evening—and this can easily prove a fatal quarter of an hour for the hostess. It may decide by a *coup d'œil* or a smack of the lips what is the length of her purse and what the quality of her taste ; for as often as not the

### 34 SOCIAL HALF-WAY HOUSE

champagne is both spurious and cheap, and the knowing guests give up all hope of reaching the summit of the social Chimborazo once this point is reached. Then they recall the table-talk and conclude it, too, was spurious—on a sliding scale that rose by a jump as high as politics, and fell with a thud as low as manslaughter. For the short, elusive phrase does signal service here. It is useful 'both as a weapon of defence and as a feint at knowledge. Volumes are suggested by a few stock expressions shot from the head of the table at a given moment, intended to bring down a particular guest, but not addressed to that one. The talk flows with an abandon and a *sang-froid* which often suggest long and arduous premeditation. The hostess pats Plato on the back, hints that she has walked the mazes of philosophy with the Peripatetics, and can, at a pinch, muse a whole afternoon under the classical sycamores of the ancient Academy. Her consciousness seems to work automatically. The slightest hint dropped into the machine evokes a response. Anything may come from the slot by the dropping in of a half-dollar piece or a crooked penny. It requires

## **SOCIAL HALF-WAY HOUSE 35**

eyes and ears used to the devices of the artificial world to discover the make-believe, even on such an occasion.

The half-way house is of many kinds; each has a character of its own, each founded on some chimera more or less fascinating, according to individual taste and ambition. Here it is a title, there it is display; one is noted for tact, another for supposed culture; while now and again the assumption of a mysterious authority bewilders and fascinates the seeker for the summit. And this seeming authority, being a pure illusion in the mind of the aspirant, may be defined by any dozen persons in as many different ways. Nor could it be otherwise in a house where impressions and effects are produced by a juggling with appearances. If it be a woman who presides here, all her resources are strained to produce an adequate first impression, one that will stamp itself on the mind of the new-comer with the force of a mallet. And it is not difficult to impress the consciousness by some special thing or person. There is magic, for instance, in a brace of old miniatures, hung low, in an odd place, with seeming carelessness. A secret and potent

## 36 SOCIAL HALF-WAY HOUSE

charm issues from a pair of life-sized portraits, the colour somewhat dim, the frames a little rusty, especially if the nose of the male ancestor be Roman and that of the female Grecian, with eyebrows long, delicate, and arched. With some such objects and an old, jewelled brooch, comb, or a couple of antique rings, not purchased by the possessor, the first impression is apt to penetrate deep and last long. With such simple and apparent suggestions of social influence the mistress of the house would break the spell by an allusion to her ancestry; it would not only be superfluous, it would signify a lack of that art so essential to the maintenance of captivating and lasting illusion. It is the business of her friends to see to it that the new visitors have their first impressions burned into the memory by a few suggestive words, handled as with the skill of a master in the flattery of faces and people. And what a difference there is between a mere stamp and a seal! A stamp is the symbol of time and power—it suggests names and dates, facts and figures; but the seal is used to produce an impression on wax. It represents no date or fact, but a quality, an

## SOCIAL HALF-WAY HOUSE 37

atmosphere, a distinction. Commerce is stamped ; society is sealed. But at the half-way house the sealing-wax symbolises the people who undergo the pression of a counter-feit seal.

After such things as these the most important weapon is an air of feigned assurance. Charity may cover a multitude of sins, and keep them covered, but assurance can never hide a world of ineptitude for long. And this is one of the reasons : it is always accompanied by an aplomb as blind as it is self-willed. It errs from want of tact, in hasty hints, in promises of fine things, leading to nothing except the prolongation of the patience and endurance of each fresh acquaintance. Yet, its first impression strengthens the most wavering and dispels the doubts of the most sceptical. But there is too much fire and flame, too little of the smoke of suave and spiral illusions. Its rule is brilliant, vigorous, and brief. The next in order of importance lies in a grace of manner, little tricks of speech, accompanied now and then by an affectation of sympathy and appreciation, all of which, taken in the aggregate, tips the balance to the side of



### 38 SOCIAL HALF-WAY HOUSE

success but counts for nothing when considered by each person separately.

One of the most curious things about the half-way house is that it looks down on vacancy. The truth of the matter, the actuality stripped of all extraneous deceits, resides in the paradox of the house having nothing beneath it. Its supposed position on the social mountain is measured neither by tape nor talent. Rather does it float in the vague spaces of the imagination, where belief and supposition have their rule. Hence the indescribable sensation when the mind awakens to a full realisation of the deception. This house, like the hut on the mountain, would not exist but for the accommodation of summit-seekers. The flow of visitors is without end; the stream taps the reservoir of illusion behind which the two worlds of ambition and vanity—mental hemispheres immense as two oceans—divide between them the poles of desire and disillusion.

If the flow of new-comers is continual, so is the flow of out-goers. The discriminating pass out and *down* with as little delay as possible. For such as these it is not a

## SOCIAL HALF-WAY HOUSE 39

question of going higher, but one of descending to an atmosphere where the respiration is normal, the pulse healthy, and the mind unhaunted by chimeras. But in many cases it requires some time even for the wisest to discover that the so-called ascent is nothing more than a continual zig-zag round and round, leading again to the point of departure. The best minds do not climb into the best society, and can have no need for the houses supposed to lead higher. Every person of refinement and talent comes at last by a secret attraction to that plane which Nature intended for each, and, taken on strictly philosophical grounds, there is no higher and no lower—but only the natural.

## MARAT AND ROBESPIERRE

**CREEPING** from cave to cave like a beast of prey, halting on the threshold of hunger and famine, consumed by a slow fever, haggard, his head bound in a red handkerchief, his shirt open at the front, his legs swathed in old rags, his shoes covered with patches, Marat was the incarnation of hate without reason and fury without respite. In him the outstretched arms of groaning generations and the agony of unheeded multitudes were symbolised in one long-continued gesture of vengeance and vituperation. The stifled groans of the hungry, the unheard petitions of the condemned, the lamentations of the miserable, the threats of envious and disappointed plotters, were revived and concentrated in this raucous voice that filled the Convention with whirlwinds of invective. He, too,

had patience, the patience of smouldering vengeance, waiting for cyclopic powers to lift the hatches from the mountain and let the lava ascend from the bowels of brimstone.

The Revolution symbolised all passions, hopes, ambitions, fears, ideals, vanities, virtues, and madness. People ceased to be ordinary beings, and became living symbols. All living things were represented by some sign, shape, sound, or colour. There were doves of peace and birds of prey descending like the vulture from secret and hidden places, human animals and human reptiles. Something magical had changed the nature of persons, groups, and parties. Danton, whose speech typified the roaring of a lion, seconded the ferocious growling of Marat the tiger. The Convention, at first amused by his writings, now listened to his speeches with mingled feelings of gaiety, contempt, and indifference. It was the mood best suited to assist Marat to attain the dream of his life—the destruction of every person and thing representing authority; for while the Assembly sat and listened, he was unwinding with unerring precision the thread from their little ball of life. As they sat listening, half in pity, half

## 42 MARAT AND ROBESPIERRE

in mockery, the standard of liberty was being lowered, while the black flag of terror was being hoisted behind their backs. Little by little the truth became apparent, they realised the presence of some destructive invisible energy, a wave of fatality set in motion by some mysterious power, as from the lips of Marat the accusations were hissed forth as from a human furnace, stripping the Girondins of hope and courage, paralysing the Jacobins by a presentiment of terrors unnamed and unforeseen. As the days and weeks wore on, the fatal influence of the outcast hypnotised the deputies in their seats. So much licensed audacity had never been known in the history of parliaments. No one had breath to oppose such unrelenting invective. Danton the lion growled a patronising assent. Robespierre the owl blinked, closed his eyes, and pretended to sleep. Saint Just, a Utopist with a petrified heart and the cold-blooded vice of an intellectual saint, cooled for a moment Marat's fevered brain with unctuous flattery and icy compliments. These attentions, fears, evasions, and patronising airs added fuel to his fury, strength to his decrepit body, and a super-

human energy to an audacity which would now pass the bounds of human wit and daring. While the audacity of Danton was a monstrous blunder, that of Marat was direct, unrelenting, never looking back, brushing everything aside in his triumphal march to the dungeon and the guillotine. The audacity displayed by Danton was a passionate outburst, regretted as soon as past; that of Marat belonged to the temperament of the man. Instead of giving way to doubts, reactions, and feelings of remorse, he grew more audacious with every discourse, more fearless with every edict, more cruel with every crime.

At last the awful awakening came—the Convention realised that here was the bolt that would open the dungeons, caves, and secret retreats of Paris; the image and speech that would add frenzy to famine and chaos to confusion. Before the advent of Marat the Assembly was like a cauldron just beginning to simmer; but now his fevered veins added the one drop that changed it to a seething witch-broth of conflicting passions, interests, and ambitions.

The Revolution had begun like a whirlwind, but Marat made of it a cyclonic and

## 44 MARAT AND ROBESPIERRE

irresistible force. He was the centre around which the sections whirled in irretrievable anarchy. From this vortex no one escaped ; he hurled leader at leader, group against group, made hypocrites of the majority by mortifying individual pride, brought in confusion, fear, and cunning, made heroes of cowards and precipitate boasters of cautious and sober counsellors. People beheld him with mingled feelings of disgust, contempt, horror, and stupefaction. An oratorical leper had crept into the arena of politics, and the stoutest gladiators refused to grapple with death in so fearful a form. When he disappeared in his bath of blood the Assembly breathed a long sigh of relief. Then, to appease the people, they accorded him the honours of a hero and a martyr. They had been dealing with a madman whose methods were uncompromising and triumphant, a logical lunatic sent to heap ridicule on the vanity of Utopists and opprobrium on the doings of the populace.

Marat was no more. And now, crouched behind the anxious horde, sat Robespierre,

awaiting like a hungry hyena the passing of the human shadows on the dial of Time. Like one of the predestined, he possessed the patience of demoniac genius with the prudence of worldly wisdom. In his seeming weakness there was strength, in his patience a hidden power, in his power the force of destiny. He began by being the Momus of the Assembly, his appearance on the rostrum being the signal for sarcastic badinage. He was regarded as one of Nature's jokes; but that is how Nature lays her traps. The greatest tragedies begin by a sort of cap-and-bells performance; the cynical and the sinister are reserved for the closing scenes. Terrible are the laws by which the psychic action of the thing men call Fate is manifest to the eyes of men; terrible are the secrets of Nature because unfathomable by the science and the arts of the human understanding. As at the foot of a volcano in eruption, beauty, titles, wealth, and glory avail nothing, so all the political and social power of France failed to turn Robespierre from his appointed rôle. Feeble, yet mighty, he waited, unshaken by the tears and entreaties produced by the pandemonium of passions which surged about him.



## 46 MARAT AND ROBESPIERRE

Voltaire was the Vesuvian spitfire that preceded this social upheaval; Rousseau was the fountain that sprinkled the parched earth with the waters of compassion. But the hour arrives when sparks and flashes give way to a hurricane of hot hail, when the tears of compassion turn to fire and brimstone. Once, if never before, the classes and the masses were destined to meet face to face on level ground; and the majority would have a long period of triumph, more furious than that of any majority in the history of civilisation. The French Court had been but a lamp at which the moths of the great world had scorched their wings; the Revolution was a net spread by the Furies to amass the human shoals in a series of suspended calamities, in which hope and horror would alternate with the ebb and flow of distracted multitudes. It requires time to realise the full force of tyrannic and tragic disaster. Suspense was the dread balance in which Robespierre swung his victims over the abyss of annihilation, touching by turns the brink of hope and the seething surface of the awful pit, sousing the human shoals in an ocean of tears, until there were no eyes

## MARAT AND ROBESPIERRE 47

for weeping and no strength left to cling to the wrecks of fame and fortune.

How many are the years it takes for the light of the farthest stars to reach our globe, and how many æons was Nature preparing for this wondrous tragedy ! Our globe is an atom in the ocean of things, Robespierre was an atom in the world of folly and frippery. He began by being a nobody. In this Assembly of hundreds he was the most provincial, the most halting, the most shuffling, the most insignificant. The heavy eyelids served to veil the clairvoyant vision behind them, and the man, as he sat, resembled a human owl with agate eyes, brooding a long and final descent to the shores of Tartarus. For these eyes alone of all that Assembly could see through chaos to the farthest rim of Erebus. Still and silent, as the twilight that predicts the typhoon, he brooded, haunted by phantoms of terror and glory, amidst feelings too deep for words and ambitions too vast for human expression. His early speeches were tentative, abrupt, and abortive ; but during the intervals of calm he gathered fresh force for the next encounter, and the day came when he alone of all that

## 48 MARAT AND ROBESPIERRE

surging crowd was master of his passion and the cool conductor of his frigid and nameless fury. As the Convention descended towards the arena of death, the Mountain loomed higher and higher before Robespierre. He would ascend to its summit, using as guides friends, foes, groups, and parties, and watch them, seized with vertigo, stumble one by one into the abyss of phantoms.

The obscure and timid Advocate of Arras became the one fixed star of the Convention around which all revolutionary planets revolved, and the slow, mysterious unrolling of the tragic panorama seemed like a revival of the legends, symbols, and mysteries of the mythological past. The reticent Vergniaud, orator reserved for the great and solemn days, was the Jupiter, the hot-headed Danton was the Mars, the cynical, irresponsible Camille Demoulins was the Bacchus, the merciless Lambertine de Mericourt symbolised the Furies, Madame Roland stood alone as Minerva, the siege of Troy was enacted again in the taking of the Tuileries, a new Helen arose in Marie Antoinette, and a new Hector in Barnave. But Robespierre's silence became more menacing than their threats.

## MARAT AND ROBESPIERRE

There was something in his mien more sinister than their gestures, while the inexorability of his arguments seemed more fatal than the most vindictive tirades of all his enemies. He would doom them all by a phrase, a shrug of the shoulders, or a wave of the hand. It would appear that in him all the demoniac forces in Nature were concentrated for the overthrow of existing laws, beliefs, and systems. He finished with the guillotine what Rousseau began with a goose-quill. The Neros, the Napoleons, the Rousseaus, and the Robespierres represent the volcanoes of humanity. Some smoke is seen, some distant thunder is heard, a slight trembling is felt. Suddenly the seal is torn from the vial. Power, pomp, and dynasties disappear in the vortex. Human beings are whirled away like so many atoms. The ordinary mind is left stupefied by the terror and the awe, the philosopher dumbfounded with the wonder and the mystery.

## IN SANTA CROCE

YEARS after Ernest Renan had ceased to believe in religious ceremonies he confessed that he could, were he to give way to his feelings, pass whole hours every day in some old church or cathedral, musing and meditating on the mystic signs and symbols, in the dim light, shut off from the noises and the crowds of city and street. Most old churches have something in common, yet all possess some individual characteristic. A cathedral has what might be called an "aura" of its own, created by the shape and the dominant colour of the stained-glass windows. And I found, after a long experience, that all have their hours, days, and seasons, like certain flowers and certain people. There is something personal in their mystical quality, and it is useless to attempt to take them by storm.


Rarely does an ordinary tourist get so much as a glimpse of the soul of an old church ; what they usually see is the glare, if the sunlight strikes the windows. No lasting impression has been made because no understanding has been attained. When I first entered Notre Dame de Paris, in 1869, what impressed me most was the sombre purples of the stained glass, and after that the deep depression caused by the funereal aspect of the whole interior. It was a place where a Savonarola might have announced the downfall of the Empire in accents fitting the mystical terrors suggested by the overpowering purple and gloom. Notre Dame on a cloudy day in autumn is the first degree of a purgatory for saints and sinners alike. No wonder the Middle Ages was a time of fear and trembling for those whose faith was fixed in the rites and beliefs of the Church. But imagine Bossuet delivering one of his great funeral orations in one of the old churches of Paris ! A memorable *frisson* for prelates, poets, monks, and mystics ! I spent a whole winter poring over the orations of Bossuet and the great classical preachers of his time, and I too, after the lapse of centuries, felt the fire of his eloquence,

and I seemed to hear the terrible words pronounced from a pulpit of gloom in the midst of flickering tapers, before a congregation of royal princes, nobles, and the greatest dignitaries of France, when the foundations of royalty seemed to be slipping from under the feet of the brilliant Court, during a silence in which all held their breath: "Madame is dying—Madame is *déad*!" That was a time when poetry, literature, and religion were inseparable.

From the sombre aspect of Notre Dame de Paris to the worldly splendours of Saint Isaac's at Saint Petersburg there is a wide gulf. In Saint Isaac's I could never make myself believe I was in a structure intended for serious meditation. I could not discover or feel anything mystical or mediaeval here. Saint Isaac's is a gorgeous temple for the display of the jewelled icons; all over the vast interior, jewelled heads of saints; diamonds, emeralds, opals, rubies, shine with a brazen magnificence and pagan luxury. A fitting place for typical modern tourists who worship the magnificence of mammon and who judge of the beauty by the cost, one of the show-places where dollars and golden

eagles count for more than poetic illusion and religious feeling. In 1872 I witnessed the ceremony of an Easter morning in Saint Isaac's, when each hand held a lighted taper, and the great dome was lit by thousands of small lights and ten thousand moujiks stared in ecstasy at the magical sight. But even at this ceremony I felt no thrill. I could not get clear of the feeling that all this fabulous wealth of jewels and pillars of precious stone and marble sixty feet high was intended for nothing but ostentatious show.

But of all the great show-places of the world the most pompous and the most pagan is Saint Peter's at Rome. A vast storehouse of polished marble, it imposes by its vastness and repels by its emptiness. It is a huge body without a soul, without colour or warmth, character or mystery. Nevertheless, it contains one priceless masterpiece: "La Pietà" of Michelangelo, enough to infuse a ray of divine fire into everything near it. After Saint Peter's it is a relief to get back to the calm mysteries, the superb colouring, the poetic enchantments of cathedrals like those of Cologne and Strasbourg, to say nothing of others in France and elsewhere, or of the






old churches which hold a greater charm than the vaster structures. Paris is the city for enchanting churches, but the finest music I ever heard was in the cathedral of Milan.

. . . . .

The secret of perennial youth is wonder. When things cease to evoke a sense of wonder, mystery vanishes and art dies. When Emerson declared that the sight of flowers in spring no longer aroused in him the feelings they aroused in his youth, he admitted he had lost the sense of poetry; for, when poetry withers, wonder is an impossibility. This *blasé* feeling in Emerson made of him an intellectualist, keen and alert, but not penetrating when dealing with the genial mysteries of poetry and art. The old Church of Santa Croce, in Florence, is certainly no place for the intellectualist. Here, as nowhere else, we require to sense the poetic aura which pervades everything. Nothing is needed here but a sense of what I might call natural art. The form and tone of the interior are so simple and natural that everything not in strict harmony with this naturalness comes as a disagreeable surprise; for

example, the female figure on the tomb of Rossini, which has all the pose of an amateur actress rehearsing a rôle in a classical drama. Rossini died in Paris in 1869, and his tomb in Santa Croce represents the best that Italian art could furnish ; yet a more striking contrast could hardly be imagined than that created by this work and that of former epochs here. Beside the work of the sculptor, the colours of the windows, the marble slabs underfoot hiding the bones of so many knights, beside the pillars arranged to produce an illusion of distance, and so many other interesting and impressive things, what was to be seen in the wonderful old church? More important than all, I saw some living human beings. Ruskin says, with truth, that a landscape fails to produce the desired effect when the artist has left out the living figure. An old church like Santa Croce, destitute of the living, is no better than a desolate tomb. The poor coming here to worship are the vital dots and accents in the solemn silence of the days, seasons, and cycles of the centuries ; they animate the marble with palpitating life and assume a kind of gesture for the dead. Italian gesture is sometimes



a sort of music for the eyes. I saw lately what an Italian actor could do with his arms and hands. We were amazed and delighted. But in a church like Santa Croce the gestures are not for the eyes, but for the soul. Great thoughts come from the heart, and the most expressive gestures come from the deepest emotions, always the same in the effect they produce, always related to hope and suspense, to life and death. I saw a group of some thirty persons, men and women, all of the poorer classes, clustered in one corner of the church one early morning just as the sun was beginning to light the long, narrow windows, casting a radiant glow over the altars and monuments. A solitary priest appeared, intoned a short service, like some revenant arriving amidst an assembly of phantoms; then he glided away, and the group slowly dispersed, and one by one fresh arrivals gathered, halting and meditating here and there, lonely, languid figures cast up from the ocean of humanity on the stones of Santa Croce amidst the laurel wreaths of fame and the wrecks of a thousand fortunes.

Almost all modern art is theatrical, like the age itself. There seems to be no escape

from the self-conscious. The naivety that formerly made great poets and artists is rare in our day. The quality of Italian art in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries was like Shakespeare's quality of mercy—it was "not strained." Didactic poetry is an intellectual vice, like pedantic art. In Santa Croce Italian feeling and sentiment dominated intellect, and now, after the lapse of centuries, the effect produced is that of a unified simplicity; the atmosphere is not that of an old museum, but that of some quaint garden, half shade and half sunshine.

Above all, Santa Croce is a place for poets. This is the real temple of the Muses, where Michelangelo sits enthroned as the Jupiter of them all, poet before everything else, and for the best of reasons: poetry is the supreme medium of the creative faculties. Dante possessed a greater imagination and more illusion. In the work of Michelangelo there was no place for illusion. He was the greatest emotional realist the Christian world has ever known. I can find no match for him in the ancient world except Isaiah. But I never could think of Isaiah looking like Dante. The difference between Dante the

austere poet, and Michelangelo the ineffable artist, is very great. The truth is: Dante has to be reached, while Michelangelo *reaches us*; *the one works on our imagination*, the other on our feelings. And between the two powers—imagination and feeling—the last grips and holds, while the other moves us as in dreams. Compare the two heads—they are both here in Santa Croce: a cold, impersonal dignity characterises the features of Dante, who seems to be absent from our world; Michelangelo abides with us. He is emotion controlled by art, feeling expressed in sheer power.

His bust, placed above his tomb, is so intensely real that the powerful statues below, which were intended to mean many significant things, mean nothing in comparison. Of all the faces known in the world of art, that of Michelangelo expresses the deepest feeling. All his work in marble is the result of this expression. Power in the hands of other artists too often leans to violence, as in Rodin and Zola. The real realism is not muscular contortion and violent gesture, but the expression of power from within.

A genius like Michelangelo does not seek

to impose on us his theories and his thoughts ; he attains the miraculous by creating a form for his emotions. How is such a thing possible in marble? It is done in music and poetry; but how can the cold marble embody an emotion, or, rather, a whole universe of emotions? Yet this has been accomplished in the marbles known as "Night and Day," "Morning and Evening." In the figure supposed to symbolise the evening we are face to face with the decline of ages.

The poet can see from what a distance such a figure descended. Every evening has had a morning, and the morning of this wonderful figure endured from Romulus to Cæsar; its noon from Saint Augustine to Dante, and now the twilight of the Renaissance descends on a world withering under the immeasurable weariness of all the art and empire of a swift and abysmal civilisation. Supreme art is nothing but a stupendous effort to shorten the shadow of death that looms in perpetual menace before the imagination of the artist.

Compared with this Mountain, always visible to the poet, all other realities appear as pleasant hills, fleeting clouds, and eph-

meral passions ; compared with this Reality the world itself is a sham, ambition a lie, popular applause a deception, the opinions of people a futile impertinence.

Dante's true greatness was shown in his attitude towards the world—he put it behind him long before he passed away ; and in the life of Michelangelo, who lived within the shadow of the Mountain, nothing else mattered. The most robust genius seen in the light of the real becomes a phantom, like the plebeian politician and the back-biting mediocrity. Until we realise that nothing matters we are not fit to live. Until we realise that all is vanity we are not ready to die. Dante, Beethoven, Goethe, Michelangelo, and many others were possessed by a power which made them independent of praise or censure. The artist, whatever other people may do or say, must and will persist in working out what he sees and what he feels. The man who works for popular applause does so either because he is limited to the little things of the day or because he has not yet learnt to know his true powers.

It was to Santa Croce the poet Vittorio Alfieri used to come to seek for inspiration,

and his lines beginning "O gran padre Alighieri" were addressed to the Dante monument here. For myself, I prefer the much simpler and more poetic tomb of Alfieri. It is the work of Canova, simple, beautiful, and serene; and perhaps after this tomb the one that impresses me most is that of Galileo, whose face is turned towards the skies, and whose attitude suggests the sublime thought of Immanuel Kant, who said that the two things which moved him most were "the starry heavens and the moral law."



## THE EMOTIONAL POWER OF GENIUS

IN one of Mr Arthur Symons's most illuminating pages he says of Duse: "Her face expresses all the emotions of the world, which she has felt twice over in her own flesh."

The words "emotions of the world" imply a quality of universal sympathy, a catholicity of temperament, which cannot be assumed by reading or study. This quality is of all others the one which distinguishes great artists, poets, and writers from thousands of others in the same profession. It made Michelangelo more human than Raphael, Millet more attractive than Meissonier, the Brontes more fascinating than Thackeray, and Duse a greater actress than Sarah Bernhardt. Technical perfection does not

## EMOTIONAL POWER OF GENIUS 63

imply creative power. Madame Bernhardt is perfect as far as dramatic art can go, but that great actress is limited to the confines of her own temperament, which no art or science can change.

People who see Duse act for the first time are likely, during the first two or three scenes, to receive an impression of amateurishness. Playgoers have not been used to the unaffected and the spontaneous in dramatic art. They have been accustomed to artifice, not to natural feeling and unaffected gesture; but the critical mind soon realises the difference between the real and the artificial, between the joys and the sorrows of real existence and stage tears and laughter, and when Madame Bernhardt weeps in *La Dame aux Camélias*, only the inexperienced are impressed by the acting, and the truth is, Madame Bernhardt has never felt "the sorrows of the world." We are in the presence of a great artificial actress, but not a great emotional personality. At such times she does what the melodramatists of the Adelphi do when they concoct a sensational scene. Everything that is arrived at by mere study fails to achieve the highest result.

## 64 EMOTIONAL POWER OF GENIUS

Profound feeling, then, is one of the principal ingredients of genius, if, indeed, it is not the leading trait. All the great orators, from Demosthenes to Burke, possessed this power, and speakers may be witty and fluent and wise and convincing, but great they never are without the faculty to generate and transmit emotion. What is the cause of this emotional power? For everything 'has a reason and a cause, and none but the superstitious believe in machine-made intellects. The cause is to be found in a broad and active sympathy with everything that lives and moves, a natural and spontaneous appreciation of everything animate and inanimate. "*Sunt lacrimæ rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt*," "a sense of tears in mortal things," beneath all a substratum of passion, above all a region where imagination conceives and creates.

There are two kinds of art—the kind that springs from simple instinct, and the kind that develops by degrees, assuming a higher and higher place in the world of creative force according to circumstance and experience. When we witness the performance of a lightning calculator, or an infant musician

## EMOTIONAL POWER OF GENIUS 65

who, at the age of three, plays the piano and composes tunes, we may, without running any great risk, lay a wager that such a performance belongs to the realm of pure instinct.

Of the many prodigies brought before the public during the past twenty years, how many have developed genius? Scientists and philosophers who pretend to explain away personal sympathy and personal antipathy have not only human nature against them, but the whole force of the physical and moral universe. Writers who attempt to explain away genius by some theory which reduces it to the level of mechanical impulse are not taken seriously. On the other hand, the empirics who try to explain it by the hypothesis of neurotic influence have made themselves ridiculous. Only the ignorant are impressed by this sort of reasoning. According to the neurotic hypothesis, Darwin possessed a weak intellect, because he wept when he received a letter from a brother scientist who wrote to encourage the great thinker in his work. There never yet has been a great scientist who did not possess a finely strung temperament. The scientific charlatan, when he

## 66 EMOTIONAL POWER OF GENIUS

brates about genius, forgets that Bacon, Kepler, and Newton were men of genius.

Some people are disagreeably surprised when they see an artist or a writer suddenly achieve success in a new sphere of productivity. Art-genius is to certain minds a sort of blind impulse, unthinking, unreasoning, void of personal passion and personal power; and whenever it turns its attention to the world of pure intellect, people with pet theories and metaphysical fads receive a blow which stuns them. For, if genius is a machine, what right has it to think, criticise, and formulate? It ought to permit the illiterate and the superficial to amuse themselves by tagging to it impossible explanations inadmissible by science, experience, and common-sense.

Eleonora Duse is "the artist of her own soul," and all other artists are in the same position. This is why the ones who create are such fearless critics. "Actors and actresses must all die of the plague," said Duse. "They make art impossible." The true emotional temperament is always accompanied by a critical power that is at once keen, subtle, and trenchant.

## EMOTIONAL POWER OF GENIUS 67

Millet, the artist who depicted more emotional power in one simple attitude than any other artist of his time, was one of the most fearless critics that ever lived, and he saw what none of the others could see.

Genius is not so simple a thing as some good people suppose it to be. Above all things, it is exceedingly complex. The unphilosophical take the most trivial appearances and effects for the principal traits and causes of genius. Duse's acting was taken by the crowd as the acting of one who had learned new stage tricks and invented fresh illusions to interest and to hold her audience. To the crowd she was simply more clever than any of the others. With the incompetent everything is a trick. In their opinion the self-made millionaires arrive at their vast wealth by chance instead of by business insight and absolute calculation. The ordinary mind can no more conceive what genius means than it can imagine what is going on on another planet, and I have often been amused by people who think they possess culture enough to appreciate intellect in others, but who, when the test comes, prove themselves mere children in philosophical

## 68 EMOTIONAL POWER OF GENIUS

insight. Goethe says: "The older we grow the more highly we value natural gifts; we learn that there is no way of manufacturing them." If genius were mere cleverness, clever people could imitate it with as much success as one clever conjurer imitates the tricks of another. Everything accomplished by device and technique can be taught and appropriated. When Wagner died, all the young composers of Europe set out to imitate him. In no case has the imitation resulted in the writing of a single page comparable to a page of *Lohengrin* or *Tannhäuser*; and Guy de Maupassant failed to achieve the profound emotional results of his master, Flaubert.

A world separates creative genius from the platitudes and the gestures of mere art. Compare Millet's "Angelus" with the dramatic pose shown in Meissonier's "1812." Millet's "Angelus" is natural, unaffected, and moving; Meissonier's masterpiece is all technique, pose, and artifice; and it is a comfort to know that after the prodigious and continued commercial success of Meissonier, it was the "Angelus" which at last attained the highest price ever realised since painting became a recognised art.

## EMOTIONAL POWER OF GENIUS 69

Regarded from a purely material plane, emotional power is a great "commercial asset." Consider the material success of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, Hugo's *Les Misérables*, the perennial success of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, the acting of Ristori in the poison scene in *Lucrezia Borgia*, the singing and acting of Gemma Bellincioni in *La Gioconda*, Sir Henry Irving's conception of the Jew in *The Bells*, the impersonations of Eleonora Duse, and the fabulous sum paid for Millet's "Angelus"! All these things mean fortune as well as distinction. The emotional power of genius only needs seeing and hearing to make itself felt, and it is one of the few things which make their way without public advertisement. It is a human, intellectual, and psychical magnet.

Genius is absolutely human. Philosophers and metaphysicians, with but few exceptions, become mere names in the hierarchy of thought, owing to the lack of the one great factor needed to give their work any vital value—that sympathy with every phase and condition of life which fringes the border of the unfathomable, which accompanies the poetic and the creative faculties of all true genius.



## 70 EMOTIONAL POWER OF GENIUS

Millet, by his sympathy, his vision, his sincerity, became identified with the two peasants in the picture ; they become idealistic realities. We all know what a "sympathetic nature" Millet possessed, the faith he had in his own judgment, and the patience which, night and day, upheld him in his long and trying ordeals.

Artists and writers who expect to succeed by a hocus-pocus of guess-work are doomed to failure. How simple it all looks ! Perfect poetry seems as if it had been turned out of a patent thinking-machine ; a perfect picture looks as if the painter did nothing but mix his paint and put it on the canvas ; a perfect story or essay reads as if the writer did no more than write down the fine sentences while some kind fairy spoke the words. But it is not so. Inconceivably complex are the chromatic gradations of tone and colour required in the ensemble of atmosphere and attitude in giving to any work of art a distinctive psychic significance and charm ; delicate beyond analysis is the suggestive tone which feeling and imagination create out of things and conditions ignored by the ordinary observer. All genius

## EMOTIONAL POWER OF GENIUS 71

reacts on genius. While imitation fails to produce the desired result, there is something in original and personal work which tends to create agreement in another form of art. Edwin Markham's "Man with the Hoe" is a poetic companion-piece to Millet's "Angelus." Imitation is only possible when the artist is working in the same medium of art. Here in one unique moment we see how poetry still rules as the dominant factor in the world of intellect and feeling. There is nothing it cannot reach and equal. Millet's great picture appeals to our feelings through a sentiment rendered universal by the spirit of religious emotion in the simple attitude of the two figures; but the attitude hardly does more than suggest speech. It is the silent submission of the ages to the burden of the eternal days and hours, and the two figures might possibly be dumb in their helplessness but for the poet who endows them with a new and universal meaning. He causes the picture to live with the vital movement of labour. He has changed the course of destiny by a far-reaching voice called forth after mute millenniums of servitude and enthrallment. If, as Herder

## 72 EMOTIONAL POWER OF GENIUS

says, it requires genius to criticise genius, it is no less true that it requires the work of genius to inspire genius. Millet gave us the attitude, Markham has given us the gesture of the sons of toil. In the picture the two peasants bow the head, in the poem the head is raised and the arms are lifted. Spinoza has said that one emotion obliterates another. This is true in the ordinary affairs of life. It is not true applied to emotional works of poets, writers, and artists. The poet inspires the musician, the musician the artist, and the artist the poet, and all creative work is a sort of perennial fountain whence flows the magical stream of vital emotion, *in sæcula sæculorum*, and the only potent, supernal, and insurmountable magic is that created by colour and form in art, melody and harmony in music, suggestion and rhythm in words.

## EQUALITY AND OPPORTUNITY

PERHAPS the most discouraging thing of the present time is the increase of knowledge and the decrease of wisdom. There never was a time in the history of the world when people with a little learning had so much on their tongues and so little in their brains.

In Shakespeare's time wit was closely allied to wisdom, and the wits of both sexes could think for themselves. In Pope's day wit and wisdom came together as naturally as the meeting of two streams ; but with the French Revolution the wits and the wise-heads parted company. Voltaire's sarcasm was imbibed or imitated without Voltaire's inherent culture, with the result that all the best people were hurried off to the guillotine. Culture and common-sense were more hated

## 74 EQUALITY AND OPPORTUNITY

than wealth and titles. Witty cynics showed neither patience nor reverence for the counsel that fell from the lips of the orator of the greatest days and supremest moments. The populace, headed by the *sans-culottes*, were fed with leaflets instead of books, extracts from the most superficial utterances of the most popular thinkers, and from that day on it became the custom everywhere to read quickly, imbibe quickly, and forget quickly.

Unassimilated knowledge is as dangerous as unassimilated food, and the disease most prevalent to-day is mental indigestion.

There is a law which many capable thinkers seem unable to grasp, a law regulating the advancement of the thing men call progress. At no special time has the world progressed more rapidly than at any other time. Swift progress is an illusion. Many brilliant thinkers have fallen over this stumbling-block, and the populace have followed them. All history, recent and remote, proves the impossibility of the world's rapid advancement. Each new discovery brings with it new mysteries, each step forward new problems, each promise renewed disappointments.

## EQUALITY AND OPPORTUNITY 75

There is good proof that Utopias are positive setbacks. And this seems reasonable, since all delusions are signs of weakness—it makes no difference how much eloquence and persuasiveness are used in their dissemination. The reader in a hurry to attain both knowledge and wisdom never stops to think how beset the philosophers are with error. •

It is not difficult to become a specialist; the calling fits the moods and ambitions of an age which demands an immediate result under the eternal illusion that a novel result is a manifestation of progress. Each new invention is apt to bring with it a train of unsuspected disorders and unknown discomforts. At a time when the outlook of science is more hopeful than ever, the masses have attained a level which corresponds to that at the beginning of the French Revolution. We are in a period of irreverence and persiflage. One class of the populace is tired from excitements, the other is tired from work; and between these two the prophet has a voice but no audience, the preacher an audience but no influence. And a curious paradox of the situation is

## 76 EQUALITY AND OPPORTUNITY

that never were people's bodies so well fed, while their minds were never so nugatory. The masses are suffering more from spiritual impoverishment than from lack of material nourishment and opportunity. The majority of the people display an inquisitiveness which is in no way related to philosophical or relevant curiosity; thousands are aping what they cannot reach and what Nature never meant they should attain. A spirit of mimicry characterises the inquisitive human machines of the board-schools, while the young dreamers of the so-called aristocratic schools dawdle through books and big banking-accounts with a nonchalance that proves how far off from their thoughts is the idea of the superman. Certainly, the spirit of this *Uebermensch* is in the air, imminent with menace and suggestion, although his material form may be as yet undistinguished amidst the phantoms and the ghostly isms of a passing world.

The people are suffering from the effects of an inverted meaning applied to the words "equality" and "opportunity." A world of superstition has grown up around these two words, springing in the first instance from the

## EQUALITY AND OPPORTUNITY 77

shibboleths of the French Revolution and the astounding declaration of 1776 that all men are created equal. Opportunity, in the minds of a good many people, means, not freedom to develop the best that is in them, but freedom to follow the bent of their whims. With the ambitious housemaid opportunity means whatever will give her a chance of imitating the foibles and follies of her mistress. On the other hand, the wealthy but illiterate mistress is haunted with the notion that she is the equal of all others who are wealthy, seeing that she can buy her way to most of the places frequented by women of talent and refinement. Neither will ever be made to understand that it is not position, but condition, that makes the inexorable difference, in society as in everything else. There never was a time when opportunity brought forth so many insignificant results. In Paris it has developed the Apache on one hand; and on the other an ugly and vulgar art, the like of which was never known before in the history of French painting. In New York opportunity has made the "freak banquet" an admitted institution. The typical millionaire cannot see that the freak



## 78 EQUALITY AND OPPORTUNITY

entertainment places him on an intellectual footing with his cook and his butler, who could do exactly the same if they possessed the same means.

The notion of equality, then, springs, in most cases, from a false notion of what wealth and position will bring, and not from the supposed benefits of a common fraternity. We have arrived at a time when inequality will become more and more pronounced, for science is only beginning to lay bare the crudities and superstitions taught under the ægis of equality. It will soon become impossible for the incompetent and irresponsible to frame laws for the government and control of the scientific and the philosophical. One by one the supermen will arrive. They will bring with them, perhaps for the first time in some thousands of years, the much-abused and little-understood thing known as common-sense.

## PSYCHIC PARALLELS

EVERY habitation attracts or repels according to the mental impression of the beholder. Houses and districts have a psychic influence which harmonises with the material form. Localities resemble individuals: no two are alike. Not only do the cities differ, like people, but, to the psychologist and the poet, every street has its personal atmosphere.

In the study of psychic parallels no city in the world offers such interesting examples as London. An artist walking about London will pass from one mood to another many times in the space of an hour. For the influences of locality and conformation are more potent than those caused by sound and mobility. The things that move and change have no abiding influence on the soul. It is not the traffic and movement

which make us feel deeply, but the fixed and adamant rows of brick and stone forming a sort of symbolical bas-relief for the people who dwell within. Houses symbolise the people who live in them, streets represent frames of mind, and localities mental tendencies. Neighbourhoods are provincial, cosmopolitan, commercial, or intellectual. To the author of *Vanity Fair* Baker and Harley Streets were the most snobbish streets in London; but the metropolis has changed considerably since Thackeray's time, for Park Lane, which was ultra-aristocratic so late as 1870, is now cosmopolitan in the most confused sense of that word. Worldly ambition, fashion, and snobbery are one. People take the straightest road to the desired object. Personal vanity runs parallel with fashion. This is why Park Lane has fallen a ready prey to the invaders who were compelled by the law of psychological attraction to seek a goal on the same social highroad.

People think they use reason when they are only following the inward and secret forces of attraction. Men act more from sympathy or repulsion than from reason or

experience. But the old denizens of Park Lane were not intellectually exclusive ; there was something in their composition akin to the people they looked down upon. The difference between the old and the new is one of degree : the old are standing on the top rung of the ladder, the new have just begun to climb the same ladder. We move along the parallels which Nature has marked out for us, never upon any other. The soul finds an affinity in form as well as in temperament ; habitations, streets, localities, towns, cities, plains, rivers, and lakes are all unconscious creators of mental images, moods, and sensations, which have a direct bearing on thought and affect the quality of a man's work.

Although appearances are the most deceiving things in the world, there can be no mistake about the meaning of certain districts of London. About localities like St Pancras and King's Cross no false impression is possible. Here we feel certain the mind conforms to the physical environment. Flowers and bright patches of green fail to lift the mind of the artist from the sordidness everywhere manifest from the

beginning of Euston Road, in a direct line, to the hill at Islington. The sordid has its parallels, like refinement and beauty. To the people who prefer to live in these districts the influence of the streets and houses gives as much pleasure as the atmosphere of Richmond Park gives to the poet.

Not so easy is it to judge of the denizens of certain streets, squares, and districts of the West End. The sordid districts are more ponderous and concrete ; the forces of matter seize upon the imagination and crush the soul under the weight of the universal mass ; and the mind finds no relief until the locality is left far behind. But in passing down from Hyde Park into Belgrave Square the psychological sensation is also one of sordidness, but on a higher parallel. In this square there is a unity of architecture and design, a material conformation which harmonises with the character of the inhabitants. The psychic impression is one of dreary lassitude. From one end to the other the place gives the impression of morbid refinement and unhealthy ambitions, the influence becoming more masterful when we mingle with the people. Whether considered

from the exterior or interior, it is one of the most depressing of the fashionable localities of London. It has its own personality, distinct from all the others. But Portman Square rivals it in the dreariness and heaviness of its houses. In this square the people are less fashionable, but more modern; compared with Belgrave Square it is like a chapel to a church. Geographically, as well as socially, Grosvenor Square occupies a position midway between these two—a sort of political peach in a basket of South African oranges; for it, too, is slowly being cosmopolitanised. Berkeley Square is the brightest, the personality is more marked, the houses more alluring, and the inhabitants more in harmony with the intellectual spirit of the time. If we dwell upon it, we find it impossible to imagine the inhabitants of Berkeley Square living south of the Piccadilly parallel.

But St James' Square is unique. Here, the visional impression is one of architectural squalor. It is the apple with the biggest worm in the aristocratic orchard. We think of incurable invalids, who are always away being cured; of old Rome in decadence,

## 84 PSYCHIC PARALLELS

when the nobility were resigned to whatever might happen.

There are twists and inversions in a social world which may be conceived but never witnessed. The difference between Bryanstone and Eton Squares seems to be in proportion to the great distance which separates them. The first possesses a personality of its own, the second is 'a poor imitation of Belgrave Square; and this difference has little, if anything, to do with titular distinction—it lies in the personality of the inhabitants. The names in the *Blue Book* reveal nothing that can aid the student of human nature in solving the mystery of psychic parallels, for John Smith, when he becomes Lord Bellair, may change his habits and his abode, but not his personality. This is why names and titles count for little in the scrutiny of social grades, influences, and ambitions.

The social novice, be he artist or philosopher, who receives his impressions from what he reads, instead of from what he sees and hears, will remain in ignorance of the meaning of coteries, localities, and magnetic parallels. It is not enough to look

on the map and see that Brixton is separated from Belgravia by a river, and that it is supposed to be inhabited chiefly by business people living in small villas. What concerns the psychologist is why certain people prefer Brixton to Bayswater, Camberwell to Islington, Hampstead to Hornsey.

If temperament were visible in colours we could distinguish as many colours as there are districts in the great world we call London. The expressions "local colour," "local atmosphere," applied to literature, are not idle phrases. Everything has a tone, a quality, a colour. And, as one quality may not harmonise with another, so the people of one district may be at variance with the people of another, and yet be separated by nothing greater than a street or a small hill. Every musical chord represents a colour; and there is for every person a dominant chord which is the key to the person's temperament. If we could arrive at the truth in these things we should find that the different perfumes have a correspondence in colours and musical chords.

There is a psychic and magnetic correspondence through all things. Viewed hastily,



## 86      PSYCHIC PARALLELS

everything looks like chance ; but the deeper we go into the meaning of the things which appear casual, the plainer does the law of phenomenal relativity become. Perhaps the chief cause of inharmony among people is the ignorance of the world concerning the attractive and the repulsive forces in trivial as well as in great things. If we could become clairvoyant and psychometric, the harmonious relation of people and things would become apparent ; colours, sounds, and perfumes would blend in an endless symphony of chromatic tones and tints, and we should recognise law where we now see nothing but chance or chaos.

Observing travellers have been impressed with the difference between the Neapolitans and the Romans ; but if we start from Naples and go north, we find not only a physical correspondence in the great cities of the main line, but an intellectual ascent which reaches a climax at Milan. For Rome is half Neapolitan, and Florence reminds one of Rome, but in Milan we emerge from the religious and æsthetic into a world which unites the commercial with the scientific, while it still retains something of the artistic.

Equally marked are the degrees of intellectual expression beginning with Innsbruck and ending with Berlin. Innsbruck corresponds to Naples, Munich to Rome, Dresden to Florence, and Berlin to Milan. If we take the great cities on the Atlantic seaboard, from Maryland to Massachusetts, we have another striking instance of intellectual progression in a direct line from south to north. Washington is political and social; Baltimore, religious and commercial; Philadelphia, religious and philosophical; New York, commercial, social, and philosophical; Boston, philosophical and scientific.

The districts of a city differ as much as the sections of a country. To pass from the Latin Quarter in Paris to the Rue de Rivoli and the Champs Elysées, means a transition from what is characteristically French to a cosmopolitan quarter moulded in a French pattern. The districts of London are more varied and complex, but the different quarters of Paris are more clearly defined and they are easier to classify. Who has not been aware of a change in the order of impressions while passing from one side of the river Seine to the other; it separates the old from the

new, the classical from the modern. The poets, artists, and philosophers of the Latin Quarter are enveloped in a psychic atmosphere proper to their character and their calling. In 1869, when visiting the house in the Latin Quarter where Auguste Comte lived and wrote, I seemed to realise that his philosophy would not gain many adherents among the people living on the other side of the Seine. Twenty years later, while visiting M. Paul Bourget in the heart of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, I was forcibly impressed with the appropriateness of the locality to the style and thought of his novels. The silence was like that of a Roman ruin; the house was hidden from the street by an old wall, while inside I felt the repose of the cloister and the ordered refinement of modern decoration and comfort. In the same neighbourhood lived and died Saint-Beuve, and where else in Paris could J. K. Huysmans have written his mystical novels? The Latin Quarter and the Faubourg Saint-Germain are the quarters where artists, thinkers, and society people prefer to assemble for dinner or conversation *en petit comité*. Here, as no-

where else in the world, the intellect is separated from the passions of the crowd and the exigencies of fashion. On the other side of the river, people live under the gaze of society reporters and expect to be talked about in the newspapers; but here one gravitates unconsciously to that group of persons whose interests are akin. Nowhere else in the world is the line so marked between social affinity and financial power. With but few exceptions worldly interest sways the titled people of the Champs Elysées; while intellectual sympathy and historical association keep the students, philosophers, and nobles of the old traditions in the district that lies between the Panthéon and the Hôtel des Invalides.

## NIETZSCHE AND WAGNER

GREAT minds who attempt to subordinate other minds equally gifted are doomed to disappointment. A man of strong will has all he can do to develop and maintain his personality intact without dissipating vital force in the vain endeavour to identify that personality with the character, aims, and ambitions of a master. A follower is one who obeys orders and accepts instruction. If he possess will and ability he cannot long remain a disciple. The very moment he thinks for himself he ceases to be under the control of another mind. Everyone who possesses a natural endowment is destined to work out his own salvation. A gifted young man may, during a limited period, be led by a master older than himself, but the time comes when instinct will compel

him to burst the bonds of intellectual control and be free. In these things Nature does not reason ; she uses force.

When Friedrich Nietzsche freed himself from Wagner's influence he gave as a reason the egoism of his master. But this was not the cause. It was an excuse. Men of powerful personality are not moved by mere sentiment or reason. It has been said that Nietzsche was envious of Wagner's triumph at Bayreuth. Again, this was not the cause of the rupture. There was but one cause : the action of individual will, the expansion of inherent energy, the necessity to move and act according to the immutable law which governs the mind in every case where personal power is placed under the temporary control of another personal power. The rupture between Nietzsche and Wagner would have occurred on some other occasion had it not been consummated after the production of *Parsifal*. The wonder is that no one seems to suspect the true cause. There are writers who see and hear everything through the medium of the sentimental. To such minds Nietzsche should have remained a passive disciple of the Bayreuth master ; he

## 92 NIETZSCHE AND WAGNER

should have received his inspirations from Wagner, at second hand; and his duty was to sneeze if the master took snuff and hiccough when the actors partook of the Parsifalian grail.

Personal judgment based on psychological ignorance is bound to be unjust. It is not enough to call it error. Its consequences are wide-spread and of incalculable mischief. A man is condemned because his own powers compel him to be himself, to follow his own bent, and to seek out his own inspirations. If the sentimental point of view were applied universally to men of talent, there would be no genius manifest anywhere. We might as well dictate to people in affairs of the heart as to expect men of creative ability to follow this or that master. Wagner was the first to blunder in expecting Nietzsche to become a constant disciple; Nietzsche blundered in ever dreaming to remain a constant follower. Both lacked a certain worldly wisdom. Such attitudes belong of necessity to the illusions of youth and early life.

If we wish to contemplate the deadly effects of "master" worship, all we have to

do is to listen to the operas composed under the dominating influence of the Wagnerian mode. All, without an exception, are inferior; they even fall below the standard set up by the great Italian masters whom Wagner ridiculed. They have not attained the characteristics of good German *sauerkraut*, nor the staying power of good Italian macaroni; they are neither fish nor flesh, but things that fly between the green sea and the blue heavens, for which there is properly no name, and for which there is no market except on the Fridays of compulsory fasting, when a few morsels of the strange thing are not interdicted as a danger to the body or a risk to the soul.

Without Nietzsche's revolt the Wagnerian cult would have put a stop to all independent effort in the world of music. Nietzsche and Wagner both laboured under a surplus of nerves and imagination. They had wit, but wit is not enough to neutralise the ill effects of highly strung nerves and a powerful imagination working together. The want of humour in Wagner spoiled a colossal genius; the want of it in Nietzsche made him exaggerate to the verge of fanaticism.



## 94 NIETZSCHE AND WAGNER

Both possessed plenty of ideas, patience, originality, passion, will-power, but there is nothing so fatal to a man of genius as the fixed idea that he has a mission to regenerate the world. The mission of genius is not one of regeneration but to entertain and instruct, and let the big world go on as it must and as it will. Another mistake made is to suppose that all great thinkers are philosophers. Things and people are taken too seriously by some and not seriously enough by others. Individualities like Wagner, Nietzsche, and Tolstoy fail by reason of the very thing their followers praise the most, namely, positiveness. It is the chronic positive state that makes them so negative. A writer becomes negative as soon as he asks the world to fall in with his opinions, tastes, theories, and ambitions.

Enthusiasm without fanaticism, independence without anarchy, sufficient human nature to make them weak and lovable mortals, these things make some men of genius only a little lower than the angels. For it would be impossible, with all the admiration and the best will in the world,

to live long in a house where Tolstoyism is talked at breakfast, Nietzschean philosophy at lunch, and Wagnerian philosophy at dinner, with excerpts from the dramas at supper. For these reasons I prefer to admire the statue on the monument from a safe distance, because it does not smile at grief, but frowns at the poor distracted world.

A young French poet said to me, many years ago, in Paris, with a gesture of despair : "Who can say how many poets were sacrificed to make one Hugo?" And who can say how many young composers were crushed by the Wagnerian Juggernaut while Wagner was living, and how many more it will take before his ghost is laid, now that he is dead? For it is not the real thing we have to deal with at the present hour, but the ghost. It is the middle-class mind that is now haunted, the same middle-class mind that suffered from the hauntings of the Mendelssohnian ghost for nearly forty years to the exclusion of all other ghosts, white, brown, blue, or yellow. Before Mendelssohn's day the Handelian shade stalked supreme in these Islands—the formidable spirit of the man who ordered

dinner for three, and, when it was ready, cried out to the cook : "Send up de dinner, I am de company !" For music at that time was impregnated with the roast beef and port wine languor, the sentimental comfort conferred by sacred melodies on human oxen chewing the after-dinner cud in the fashionable stalls of the stall-fed London world.

Viewed in this light, the future of music in England is anything but hopeful, for the middle-class mind is only now beginning to be hypnotised by the shadow of the Wagnerian mountain. The middle-class mind has already accepted *Tannhauser*. It has begun to nibble at a corner of *Lohengrin*, while it has one eye and about half an ear on particular spots in the *Ring*, with faint glimpses of *Parsifal* looming in the dim distance. In another decade the whole nation will be groaning under this musical mountain of pretentious and impossible snobbery. Out of a hundred who listen to Wagner, even in our day, not more than one is able to distinguish the sublime from the mediocre, and in twenty years from now the number of discriminating ears will hardly be

increased. The truth is : the mob will always demand a master. It makes no difference how much or how little they understand in the work of the master ; and similarly, the individualist will never consent to be a blind follower of any master, for the very obvious reason that the discriminating individualist knows how to appreciate all the masters—and he can never have too many, on the principle that there can never be too many flowers and beautiful landscapes in the world.

England has always been the special hot-bed for people afflicted with the one-man mania. It was Carlyle at one time, then Ruskin, then Gladstone, then Browning. All who worshipped at the shrine of Dickens detested Hugo, and the admirers of Thackeray could see no virtue in Balzac, while the *Pickwick* enthusiast and the *Vanity Fair* enthusiast passed in the street without bowing. All this made the Victorian era by far the most provincial period in the history of England since the time of Elizabeth. Everyone had a master who was accepted, not for his strength and wisdom, but for his weakness and his absurdities. Of course, there

## 98 NIETZSCHE AND WAGNER

always will be individual minds who frankly admire the excellent as soon as they see it or hear it, no matter who produces it, but up to the present time the number of such minds has been small compared to the vast army of know-nothings waiting to receive the order or the sign from some high and powerful snob to go forth and admire. Admiration is the faculty of knowing why. This explains how it is that snobbery puts a damper on the progress of genius. Browningism was brought to a sudden halt as soon as it became known that clubs had been formed in America, composed principally of elderly women with large spectacles and no idea of poetry, for the purpose of finding the key to that poet's enigmas.

It was the deep desire to revolt against mob rule in the world of art and poetry that caused Stéphane Mallarmé to write in a manner which made it impossible for even the cleverest literary snob to make head or tail of his writings. No one but his friends understood him, and it was his special aim that the others should not.

If anyone were to put the question to me, "Are you a Wagnerite?" I should answer without hesitation: "Not now; but I am willing to become a Grand Lama-ite until the Grand Lama becomes lamentably common."

## THE SYMPOSIUM ON ENDOWMENT

THE endowment of genius is one of the most ticklish questions that I have seen discussed for many a day. But it is not new to me. More than twenty years ago I read an article in an American magazine, entitled "The Endowment of Genius," by Joel Benton. I read it, and kept it. It is a theme of vital importance, to be thrashed out by writers and thinkers who, as the saying goes, have been through the mill, or, in other words, have had the chaff of illusions and deceptions winnowed from the grain. For this question of literary juries brings with it insuperable difficulties. I received from Mr Upton Sinclair a printed slip of questions, containing my name as one of those from whom he expected answers. I abstained from replying,

## SYMPOSIUM ON ENDOWMENT 101

because I think guilds, committees, societies in connection with talent and genius would be worse than useless. They would prove mere traps for genius, excellent excuses for committees composed of nobodies, or, worse still, writers and authors who have failed, to heap insult on the heads of people of real originality. The little men would always "take the cake," and genius, if it got anything at all, would get the dog-biscuit. I do not know a great artist or writer who would think of risking such conditions. One thing is certain—no writer who reveres his art would consent to compete with the crowd of prize-seekers in such a literary game. Indeed, it is not at all certain that a society formed for the endowment of genius would not do everything in its power to suppress it. One good specimen of a black sheep on the Reading Committee might suffice to turn the heads of all the others, provided he had the requisite will and personal magnetism. Such things have often been done, and will continue to be done. It would be an intellectual lottery in more than one sense. For example, the committee might happen



## 102 SYMPOSIUM ON ENDOWMENT

to lean privately to a certain form of politics, or religion, or ism, and their secret convictions or tendencies would influence and decide their votes. And it would be impossible for anyone to decide beforehand as to what the committee believed in religion or politics; there might be more Democrats than Republicans, or more Socialists than either, and the fatal part of the whole business is that genius has convictions, and insists on expressing them in poems, in stories, in novels, in essays, and in dramas. This sort of thing is most awkward, especially for persons sitting as judges; because judges of literature, like other people, are human, and go by their secret sentiments, their pet theories, and their prejudices. And there is the question of snobbery. Perhaps this would prove the greatest stumbling-block of all. In England it would mean much. The point would be made, "What are the author's private connections? Has he influential backers in society? Is he likely to become fashionable, or a favourite with the public?" Frederik van Eeden is right when he says that it takes genius to recognise genius. And, this being true, the committee

## SYMPOSIUM ON ENDOWMENT 103

would have to be composed of men of genius in order to decide with impartiality. Who are the men of genius who could find the time to read bundles of MSS.? Then, on the other hand, in a so-called democratic country a man of genius with a great historical name would have a poor show. A friend of mine in Paris, who was the winner of the gold medal at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, had to give up painting, in spite of his gifts, because he happened to be born with one of the greatest ducal names in France. He would have become one of the greatest artists of our time, and is now simply a man of the fashionable world. Mechanical genius seems to be the only genius that is appreciated and assisted. Poets, composers, writers, and artists are sought for to give tone and distinction to teas and dinner-parties. Walt Whitman spent forty years thinking, writing, and working for democracy, and the very classes he was praising were the classes which laughed at him when they did not abuse him. The good Republicans and Democrats wanted the tinkling rhymes of Longfellow and Whittier, and they got what they best

appreciated. They left Whitman to starve, and he would have starved but for two or three personal friends.

Among the answers received by Mr Sinclair I find some pithy things—some things which needed saying, and will have to be gravely considered by all who think of creating a fund for the endowment of genius. Mr H. G. Wells says: "Juries invariably become timid and narrow, and seek refuge in practical, academic, and moral tests that invariably exclude the real men of genius"; while Mr Arnold Bennett writes: "In my opinion, you require as judges neither authors who have produced first-class work nor fairish authors who have only reputation with the public; the former would be too individual and impatient in their judgments, the latter would be afraid of really original, powerful stuff." Mr Jack London thinks the plan "inadequate," while Mr Edwin Markham says that "nothing whatever has been done in America to help her struggling geniuses, and yet there is no land where the sensitive spirit has a harder struggle with iron circumstance," which is no doubt the reason why so many gifted Americans have come to

## SYMPOSIUM ON ENDOWMENT 105

Europe to work and live. The most positive and sweeping answer of all is that of Professor William James. "I don't believe in it," he writes; "what is much more needed would be some sort of old-age pension for men unable to stand on their own feet; the really tragic cases are those of older men, victims of their genius, but without earning capacity. If the philanthropists you have in mind will establish a fund for such cases as this, I shall warmly applaud them."

A society for the encouragement of genius would mean nothing without genius, just as it takes men of genius to form a literary salon. We have seen how, in Paris, the so-called political salons of the past forty years failed as salons for the reason that genius cannot be forced into fixed grooves, and the same thing would occur in any society formed for the endowment of genius. The slightest suspicion of an "ism" attached to such a society or committee would nip any such effort in the bud. On the other hand, no materialist will ever endow genius with anything. No man who does not believe in the immortality of the soul cares much what becomes of anybody with a gift. The more

## 106 SYMPOSIUM ON ENDOWMENT

selfish and material the world becomes, the more horrible will be the crimes committed and the greater will be their number ; and at the same time, the number of men and women of genius will diminish.

This leads me to the main point of this essay, which is simply this : If genius is to be assisted, encouraged, and sustained, it will have to be done privately. The old way was not a bad way. Rich noblemen took pride in becoming patrons of poets and writers. I believe this will be done again. There is nothing to prevent rich men and women from choosing some form of talent to encourage and develop. The lover of poetry will choose a poet, the music-lover a musician, the lover of literature a writer, and so on, and there would be no question of an offensive form of patronage where the patron is a real lover of the special phase of art selected, nor could there be any opportunity for humiliation where appreciation would be a leading motive in the mind of the donor.

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN

"I have imagined people in future generations asking the questions: 'What! have you seen Abraham Lincoln and heard him speak? Have you looked on Grant and Sherman?'"

WALT WHITMAN.

THE first time I saw Lincoln was at Alton, the romantic old town on the Mississippi, in the state of Illinois, in the very heart of Lincoln's country. It was on the 15th of October 1858.

I was very young when my parents left England to settle in Illinois, following the example of a kinsman who had gone out to the same country; and here, on the banks of the Mississippi, we had the good fortune to witness the last great debate on slavery between Lincoln the Rail-splitter and Douglas the Little Giant. It was a memorable day. Thousands of people poured in

from every section of the east and west. The town was like a place in possession of a ravaging army.

My father had for some years been a prominent "Lincoln man," and on this day he revelled in the final triumph of his political "idol." No words could express what the Republicans felt at Lincoln's moral victory, while the pro-slavery men looked the daggers they dared not use. For it was here, in this same Alton, that Lovejoy, the fearless Abolitionist, was assassinated in cold blood by a mob of pro-slavery "fire-eaters" some years before. I must confess that this experience face to face with Lincoln was not calculated to fill me with any special reverence for the "great" men whom I afterwards met at Washington, great as some of them were considered to be, nor for many others in different parts of the world—the famous politicians of France, for instance, whom I met in Paris on my first sojourn there in 1869, not one of whom could foresee the approaching war with Germany. In one way this experience at Alton was hardly a good beginning for me. It was like starting at the very top of the

ladder and then stepping down. Still, I have always felt thankful that I then lived and moved amongst giants, both big and little, and that I had not to wait for middle age to discover the difference between a real individual and a merely distinguished personality. Indeed, it required no great discernment to distinguish the difference between the great political debaters of that wonderful time and the self-made lawyer, wonderful even in a country famed for its brilliant self-made men.

- In St. Louis, where we went to live later, we witnessed the voting for Lincoln in the autumn of 1860; also the very beginning of the war in the interior; and there I often met Grant and Sherman. In St. Louis I acted as page to the foremost military commander of the hour, Gen. John C. Fremont, who had previously been one of Lincoln's political rivals, and was at the outbreak of the war living in a sort of princely state in a mansion on Choteau Avenue, with a brilliant retinue of officers, and as difficult to approach as some crowned heads.

In the late 'sixties, while living at Washington, I became acquainted with many of



Lincoln's friends, and heard much concerning his habits, his customs, his irrepressible humour, his love of story-telling, his incorruptible will, his prophetic patience, his belief in his mission. My friend, Don Piatt, the witty editor of the *Washington Capitol*, declared Lincoln to be the homeliest man he ever saw: "His body was a huge skeleton in clothes; his face defied artistic skill to soften or idealise, yet it brightened like a lit lantern when animated. His dull eyes would fairly sparkle with fun, or express as kindly a look as I ever saw, when moved by some matter of human interest." Another of my Washington friends, Congressman Julian, described the laugh of Lincoln as being "a laugh of the whole man, from head to heel."

For myself, I can only say that I have studied the life and work of Abraham Lincoln from every point of view, and have formed some conclusions of my own—that is, as far as the impenetrable mystery of genius will permit a student of human nature to penetrate.

. . . . .

Abraham Lincoln belonged to that rare

class whom Edmond Scherer calls "*les grands mélancoliques*." Of these I find two sorts: those who laugh because they can, and those who languish because they lack the faculty of laughter. Humour is the safety-valve of genius, a 'scape-pipe for the vapours of apprehension and melancholy. Statesmen and soldiers without this gift rush in where angels fear and devils dare not tread. A tragic gloom made Bonaparte a wandering lunatic, Bismarck a marauding minotaur, and Gladstone a man who saw everything with only one eye.

By virtue of that mysterious quality conferred on the intellect by a sense of the humorous and the absurd, Disraeli's political career was more brilliant than that of any other British statesman since the time of Burke. He, more than any other, understood the disabilities and the imbecilities of the modern social and political world. He made no move that was not well worked out in his own mind in advance. What Bacon calls the dry light of reason became, in Disraeli's case, the dry light of humour. When he laughed, it was not with, but independent of, the world. He was a practical

humorist; for there is a practical humour, as there is a practical mysticism. But the matter-of-fact methods of his jocular freaks had nothing to do with the ethics of patriotism. He swore he would arrive, and he did arrive. It was a personal affair.

Humorists may be divided into three classes: the cynical, the sardonic, and the sentimental. The cynic is a product of observation and experience, and a combination of the cynical and the sardonic made Disraeli the greatest practical cynic of the age. A practical humorist is a man who can see himself double, one who can stand outside his own body and behold himself as others would see him if for one moment he let himself commit the ridiculous. He can, if he pleases, be his own accuser, his own counsel, his own judge, and his own jury, and finish by discharging himself from the bar of his own reason without a stain on his character.

Now, Abraham Lincoln was the greatest practical humorist of his time, perhaps of all time. Where Disraeli used his wits for the advancement of his person or his party, Lincoln used his for the good of the whole

country, the furtherance of a universal principle. He laughed at his own stories, but the moral remained ; and a humorous story which points a moral is better than a moral that produces depression. Other men could very well have been mistaken for what they were not. Washington might have passed for a country squire, Disraeli for a lawyer or sculptor, Gladstone for a judge or bishop, Whitman for a country schoolmaster, Poe for an artist or musician. Alone, of all the great men of his own country, Abraham Lincoln bore the imprint of Nature on every feature, the sign of the Western soil, the virgin wilderness, the unsullied atmosphere, the untrammelled dominion of individual freedom. There was about his dark, rugged face and his gaunt figure something that harmonised with the dark, silent waters of the Mississippi in its least romantic aspects ; for Lincoln, whose existence was one long romance, was the least romantic mortal that anyone could possibly imagine. He was not an artist like Disraeli, nor a prose-poet like Burke, nor a man of imaginative eloquence like his great rival Douglas ; and for a very good reason—he had no imagination.

Humour and imagination were strong points in Disraeli, humour and logic in Lincoln.

None of the famous American humorists were men who had the imaginative faculty strongly developed ; and Mark Twain is so little of a poet that only once in his most serious book, *Life on the Mississippi*, does he speak adequately of the great river, and then only in ten lines. While Disraeli displayed humour and imagination, humour and logic held Lincoln to Mother Earth, to plain statements, plain facts, and plain people. Mark Twain has been successfully imitated, Whitman is far from insurmountable, Poe's detective stories have engendered a host of successful emulators. To imitate Lincoln one would require to be born again ; no one ever looked like him, no one ever acted like him, no humour was ever so intimately related to far-reaching vision, moods of melancholy, and moments of incommensurable and incommunicable power. Beside him the academical politicians of Virginia and Massachusetts appeared provincial rhetoricians, bookworms, or fanatics. His long, lank body, awkward hands and feet, his ill-fitting clothes, the inexorable individuality of his

head and face, made the senatorial aristocrats at Washington look like tailors' dummies from London or intellectual automators from Boston. He spoiled reams of their classical rhetoric by a page of witty reason, conciliated party fanaticism by the suave logic hidden in his outbursts of pleasantry, and sterilised the poison of patriotic bigotry by a combination of patience, tact, and prophetic intuition such as was never known before in the history of politics.

There are two kinds of oral magic: one depends upon tone, manner, and rhetoric; the other ignores these and achieves its end by the natural and the simple. Voice and rhetoric die with the age; the natural and the simple remain. The first is the vox humana, the second is the vox Dei. Abraham Lincoln possessed the second, with something more. He had about his person a quality that made domineering and quarrelsome officials hold their tongues and bow their heads in their moments of anger and desperation. This quality gave offence. In fact, there were three men who offended, while the others acted like human pictures in old-fashioned gilt frames. Poe was too

original, Whitman too natural, Lincoln too simple. The first offended by his genius, the second by his candour, the third by his never-failing humour, frank simplicity, and uncompromising sincerity.

Lincoln had in his Cabinet the redoubtable Salmon P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury, an avowed rival, planning to be the next President in place of Lincoln; the iron-willed Stanton, Secretary of War; and the proud and peremptory Seward, the greatest American diplomat of the century. His Cabinet represented "the talents, all the popularities" of the time; yet, after three years of intense opposition, fierce party-strife, and smouldering jealousy, he made them feel like cripples racing against a giant through a forest of stumps, a flock of geese that ceased from quacking to watch the far-reaching flights of the triumphant condor.

When, in May 1861, three months after the outbreak of war, Secretary Seward prepared a carefully worded despatch to the American Minister at the Court of St. James, it was Lincoln who took the despatch in hand and, with erasures and additions, proved himself a past grand-master in the

mystical diplomacy of words, an adept in the art of phraseology. This despatch, corrected by the backwoods President with so much cunning and wisdom, prevented the irreparable calamity of a war with England.

A high-pressure education means a low-pressure of knowledge. One of the secrets of Lincoln's power lay in the fact that no one ever pressed him to learn anything. A university is a forcing-tube where the brains of genius go in at the big end and come out at the little end, like patent tooth-paste or refined vaseline, the free application of which is supposed to inoculate others with the divine virus of a lingering classicism. Lincoln had the miraculous good fortune to escape the filleting process. He went through life with all his awkward bones untwisted, with his lank frame, his languid movements, heavy countenance, quick wit, dreamy moods, and clear vision. Although he was always observing and always learning, no one could add an iota to the will, the character, or the substance of the man. At the age of thirty-six he was alluded to as "Old Abe," and what he was at twenty he remained to the day of his assassination.



He possessed intuition; but intuition without experience in worldly affairs is a trap which illusion sets for the unsubmitive and hurried probationer. Without a long and varied experience, impulse and impression are often mistaken for the last word of wisdom. Experience was Lincoln's first teacher, his own genius his second. When a young man he made a trip down the Mississippi in a flat-boat, and in New Orleans got his first experience of the horrors of negro bondage.

It takes a wise politician to express animosity with tact, and in later years Lincoln expressed his opinion of slavery by wrapping his hatred in subtle and entertaining humour mingled with adroit and remorseless logic. It took him twenty years to purge the popular mind of the North of some of the superstitions about slavery. The thinker radiates ideas, the man of action applies them: Abraham Lincoln did both. He had achieved many great deeds, but on his Proclamation of Emancipation he passed from national to universal fame, and became immortal.

The famous Proclamation was issued on

January 1, 1863, and at that time my parents had left St Louis and were living at Niagara Falls, in the State of New York, far removed from the strife of war, and I well remember the excitement it caused, even so far north. But, although the slaves were now free by law, the war was not over, and some of the hardest battles were yet to be fought. The year 1863 was the most momentous year of the long and bloody strife. The beginning of the end began on the 18th of April, when General Grierson, a near relation of mine and a descendant of Sir Robert Grierson (14th Laird of Lag), the "Red Gauntlet" of Scott's novel, set out from a village in Tennessee with a body of cavalry numbering 1600 men to make what has since been known in the history of the war as "Grierson's Raid." He passed through the entire length of the State of Mississippi, the distance covered amounting in all to 800 miles, and not till this feat was accomplished did Grant and Sherman see their way to the end. The raid gave them a clearer knowledge of the military situation of the enemy in the far South, and made it

possible for Sherman to march his army of 60,000 men from Atlanta to the sea. When Lincoln heard of General Grierson's brilliant achievement, he exclaimed: "This is the first clean sweep of our troops by land to the waters of the Gulf, and I believe the worst is over."

The war ended in April 1865. But the greatest scene in the long drama was yet to be enacted. It came about in a playhouse at Washington. On the evening of April 14, while seated in a private box at Ford's Theatre, Lincoln was assassinated by Wilkes Booth, an actor of talent, crazed with fanatical and sectional hatred. The nation was plunged in mourning, party strife was forgotten, and for three weeks business ceased throughout the country. Not till May 1 did the funeral cortège reach Chicago on its way to Springfield, Illinois. I passed along through the great Court House with thousands of others to take a last look at the remains.

Abraham Lincoln changed not only the customs, habits, and opinions of the major portion of the American people, but the opinions and sentiments of millions of people

in other parts of the world. He was not a type. He loomed unique and solitary, like a sphinx in the desert of Democracy, a symbol of destiny and disruption in the Ethiopian night of modern slavery.

## THE MAKING OF BOOKS

GOOD books have but one purpose: to comfort the heart and stimulate the mind. Books that we love play the part of invisible friends. We get from them a continuous current of sympathy which acts and reacts in various ways on our own mind and the minds of others. It is through sympathy that the magic current is created. A book is valued not so much for what it reveals in the realm of pure intellect as for what it reveals of the secret sentiments and feelings of the reader. In books we see ourselves in the author and become acquainted with our own double, so to speak, as a second person. The best writers, like the best poets, "hold the mirror up to Nature." We admire most in every writer, not that which we do not understand, but that which we have long

felt but never expressed, the sentiments which we have never been able to formulate in words, the emotions that seemed too deep to be brought to the surface, the dreams that seemed too vague and distant for rhyme or reason. As we are attracted to the persons we love best, not because someone else tells us to love them, so are we attracted to the books which suit best our age, temper, and experience. We are not influenced by praise or blame in these things; the attraction comes from within. For every category of thought and experience there is a corresponding class of books; for every temperament, some other mind whose mission it is to perform the service of self-revelment. There is a secret attraction which leads us to certain books little read by the public, perhaps unknown to the public.

In youth we enjoy most the books of action, because action is the thing we most desire; when we begin to think, we become interested in ideas; and eventually we prefer the writers whose sentiments and experiences approach nearest our own.

No one can appropriate the wisdom of

another mind ; we can only appropriate the consolation offered by another. Intuition is inherited knowledge ; but the world is the distillery of wisdom. Drop by drop sagacity is distilled from experience and the liquor of life put away in the memory to mature with age. A mushroom comes up suddenly and soon withers, but the oak grows slowly and lives long. Fleeting things give confused impressions ; the mind has no time to centre on the cause of fleeting phenomena. We gravitate to certain books as to certain people ; and, as no system of education succeeds in giving us intellectual sensations and poetic emotions of which we are not capable, so no school of art or literature has ever succeeded in weaning the mind from the thing which suits it best. As for real feeling and sentiment, if you would make others weep, you must, as Horace says, begin by weeping yourself.

While it is true that many are carried away by the literary fashions of the time because of the influence of passing modes, underneath those things there is a force which compels people to prefer one book to another.

As for books of criticism, an abyss separates the critical spirit of 1900 from that of to-day ; and it is not too much to say that in another decade the narrow and insular customs and teachings of the latter part of the nineteenth century will appear as vagaries enacted in another world and will have as little influence on serious minds as the strange old fashions of 1860 now have upon us.

The truth is that the force which some people persist in ignoring is the force which has brought about the recent rapid changes in thought and criticism. That force is science. It is a cold, material thing to look at, but it has both soul and spirit ; it assumes a sort of personality. It was the engineer who made a visit from London to New York a mere matter of a few days' pleasure excursion, put Paris within seven hours of London, and made it possible for dramatic and art critics to attend first nights and the opening of exhibitions in Berlin, Vienna, and Rome, and be back again in London within a period of a few days. The telegraph and the steam-engine have accomplished a universal miracle. The telegraph, alone, brings the opinion of people living at the



## 126 THE MAKING OF BOOKS

*ends of the earth into our homes every morning, and we are made to see and feel what insularity really means.*

Art and science force the most obtuse to bow before a power superior to mere sentiment and book-learning.

A shipload of excursionists visit a foreign land for the first time. They start out brimming over with prejudice and haughty national conceit ; but the instant they land on a foreign shore they find themselves surrounded by people and things which set a cold-blooded defiance to every prejudice, every gesture, every thought and feeling which they bring with them. It is useless to complain. If they do not understand the language, so much the worse ; if they do not like the cooking, again so much the worse ; at any rate, they must eat to live and make gestures to be understood. It is the only deaf-and-dumb exercise some people ever get. But even this small experience is something. They now begin to understand the meaning of the word "travel."

To many minds the first experience in a foreign country is nothing short of an intellectual revelation. Here, on the soil of

London, Paris, Berlin, or Rome, books of travel begin to be judged exactly for what they are—some good, and many very bad. The intelligent mind begins to imbibe, as if by magic, new truths culled from the garden of cosmopolitan experience. Without quite knowing how or why, the wide-awake traveller has attained a certain knowledge of people and things which books were powerless to bestow, and he returns home wiser, more critical, with a great deal of his provincial prejudice worn off. A long sojourn abroad finishes the all-important education, and the critical mind is for ever freed from old-fashioned prejudice and cocksure judgments. And so we are prevented from repeating the old sentimental error that books, philosophy, and latter-day schools of thought have wrought the great intellectual change which the world has lately seen. The railroad and the steamship are the miracle workers. What will the changes not be in another twenty years? Books of critical and philosophical thought not based on the new order will at once be cast aside as worthless. Every critical work which gives the least sign of the insular and provincial spirit will be

## 128 THE MAKING OF BOOKS

ignored as worse than useless. It will be found impossible to sit in London, Paris, or New York, as Carlyle sat in Chelsea, and produce acceptable judgments on anything or anybody. To deal with foreign questions without having moved about in the world, even now, means contradiction and refutation at the hands of any observing sailor, soldier, or commercial traveller who may care to take up the pen and write. The universal rule now is : experience first, then analysis and judgment. Bacon was right : books must follow science.

There has been much waste of time and energy in the making of modern books. Writers like Hugo, Balzac, Tolstoy, make one think of a locomotive with steam kept at high pressure. Carlyle put into *Sartor Resartus* psychological pressure sufficient to found a colony or build a dozen retreats for aged working men. The fault of *Sartor Resartus* lies in its size. It is a book instead of an essay. What energy was expended here to little or no purpose ! Preaching nullifies itself when it passes a certain point. Many great writers spend three or four times more dynamic power than is needed in the work

they have to do. True, if the engineer did not let off the steam there would be an explosion. But that is another matter. All superfluous work is old-fashioned the moment it is printed. When we say of a serious work it has no *raison d'être* we admit its inutility; and the lack of clarity and precision in the manner of composition in any work is sufficient to nullify the whole. But in considering books like *Sartor Resartus* we have to consider two things combined in one: the manner and the subject. If Carlyle had reduced this mass of eloquence and energy to one compact essay of fifteen pages, how different would have been the result! People need suggestive writing far more than the didactic and the philosophical. Again, consider the time and energy wasted in writing the *History of Frederick the Great* in ten volumes! Is there anyone in our day, excepting a professional historian, willing to give up whole weeks to the reading of such a work?

Balzac wore himself out in writing scores of novels which no one reads now. He left three or four masterpieces, and died before he had time either to see or enjoy life. Tolstoy, in *Peace and War*, and *Anna Karenina*,

wasted much energy. Long works are too often like long sermons which end in fatigue. There are laws which defy even the forces of genius to render void. There is something painful in the thought of Victor Hugo sitting down in the cold and cheerless room of a Brussels hotel, with bread and water before him, there to scribble as fast as the pen can be made to move, all day and half the night, like an automaton without sense or sensibility. There is in such work much of the garrulous spirit, little of the soul of inspiration. And the futility of it is appalling. Balzac, who sat in his garret all day and night writing novels which found little favour even in his own day, may have thought such books absolutely necessary, but we know now for a certainty that they were not. And, somehow, we do not sympathise with an author who writes for twenty-four hours without intermission. Georges Sand seated herself at her writing-desk and began work much as a typist would begin to copy. When she had filled a sheet of paper, she let it fall on the carpet; when the carpet all about her was covered with manuscript, she would cease writing. Zola, in his turn,

wrote six pages every morning. We can hardly blame some people for considering genius to be automatic, and believing that it writes without knowing how or why.

It is impossible that a book which contains neither scientific analysis nor literary inspiration can long hold a serious place in the intellectual world. There are no supreme works written in the ordinary moods. Chateaubriand, Flaubert, and Renan meditated for months, and sometimes years, before beginning a new work. They waited for the inspiration. With them, thought was like a conscience; a mood, something sacred; an inspiration, like an eternal benediction. They were artists in the sense in which Goethe speaks of art. Chateaubriand died in 1848, and Balzac in 1850; the first was thirty years writing his *Mémoires*, the second wrote scores of novels which no one reads; and while Georges Sand was daily covering her carpet with manuscript, her friend, Gustave Flaubert, was waiting for the idea, taking notes, meditating, correcting.

Adventure and romance come to every one who moves about in the world. The

## 132 THE MAKING OF BOOKS

more people travel the less interest they take in certain books. When we read Gibbon we are held by the personal style of the writer and the relation of romantic facts. He tells us of real people. We move on and on with the historian, feeling that we are walking the earth and meeting its denizens in flesh and blood. We are brought face to face with human passions, ambitions, follies, adventures; we pass from one epoch to another by a natural process. This is why Gibbon is great. But Chateaubriand is still greater, for the reason that he tells us what he himself saw, heard, and felt.

History, therefore, is of two kinds: what is related from documentary evidence as actual reality, and what is related as personal experience. But personal experience will always take the first place in the minds and the hearts of people who think. *Vanity Fair* is certainly the work of a master; but the difference between *Vanity Fair* and De Quincey's *Confessions* is that the first entertains us by fictional scenes and circumstances, while the second entertains and instructs us on a basis of actual fact, and

compels us to descend or rise with the author through scene after scene of personal hope and despair, physical suffering, and mental anguish altogether individual, experienced, and real. De Quincey's *Confessions* cause us to live through a period of psychological and physical experience worth more than all the sermons ever preached against the evils of opium-eating. We get a moral without preaching. And for this reason the *Confessions* will live when *Vanity Fair* has passed away.

In works of fiction we imagine we know; in personal works we feel that we know. For the imagination leaves the mind in doubt, and the result is often negative. A personal narrative contains, first of all, the advantage of the psychological effect of the actual experience; secondly, the indelible impression created by the knowledge of that experience. In drama, the assumption of sincerity weakens the impression; one gesture too much, one movement in the wrong place, is enough to dissipate the illusion of reality. The greatest sorrows are the most silent; and the personal feeling is one of the secrets of supreme worth.



## 134 THE MAKING OF BOOKS

The minds who have risen above ephemeral states and passions, who have attained a plane superior to the noises of the world, are the ones who hold the most authority and the most charm. In the race of genius they win in a canter. It is the sententious and sensitive "I" which gives the essays of Montaigne their wonderful vitality. He never thinks until he begins to write, and the spirit that moves him is, to a certain extent, garrulous; but the narrative of personal hopes, fears, doubts, and daily impressions, told with candour and sincerity, makes the book immortal. In the *Essais* we are not only thinking, but living with a human being. It is philosophy mingled with human experience. Montaigne holds us by his personal gossip, his natural manner, and a rare gift of penetration and common-sense. No wonder Madame de Sévigné cried: "Ah! l'aimable homme que Montaigne! qu'il est de bonne compagnie! c'est mon ami; mais à force d'être ancien il m'est nouveau. Mon Dieu! que ce livre est plein de bon sens!"

The writers who assume an authority by preaching it are never the ones who wholly

succeed. The real authorities are too serious to take the world seriously. The greatest content themselves with transcribing impressions, recording events, portraying persons, spiritual states, and material conditions in the simplest manner possible. They possess too much common-sense to become fanatical, and too much discretion to sermonise. Montaigne, Bacon, Gibbon, Chateaubriand, Goethe, Flaubert, Renan, were egoists in the highest and most philosophical meaning of the word. The true authoritative mood is instinctive; it is not put on as a warrior would don a coat of mail. Bacon writes with the force of an eternal edict; Gibbon with the pomp of a Roman triumph; Flaubert with a kind of philological magic intended only for his equals; Renan with the placidity of a human sphinx who never winces; Chateaubriand with something like the quality of an elegiac symphony, whose movements include the heroic and the pastoral.

Every perfect thing passes beyond the limit of the definable. The contour and expression of the highest personal beauty, the fragrance of the rarest flowers, the suggestive melodies in the most inspired

## 136 THE MAKING OF BOOKS

music, the atmospheric influence of a perfect day or a moonlight night—these and other things possess an element and an influence which evade analysis. Everything that can be described with precision falls below the level of supreme attainment. It is easy to analyse the fabric of the loom, but the gossamer web which imagination and sentiment weave from the souvenirs and sensations of life eludes precise definition. Mere power can never create an atmosphere in any art. The psycho-artistic atmosphere constitutes the creative charm. Works like Zola's *L'Assommoir* make us feel the reality of the author's power without poetic distinction. No athletic grace is required in the wielding of a mallet or a battle-axe. And there is a marked difference between the egoism of power and the egoism of intellect. Powerful writers are never happy unless they are manifesting their power. It would be too much to ask them to desist for a period long enough to distinguish and discriminate. But the finer egoism of the intellect is not content with the writing of six pages every morning; it is inspired by a feeling of selection, a sense of the economy of moods and emotions.

Between personal power and personal charm there is a great gulf fixed. The author of *L'Assommoir* forces the reader along, for the reader does not always desire to go. The author of *Sylvestre Bonnard* persuades, creates an atmosphere, and charms. With him we are glad to go

M. Anatole France has tact, taste, and philosophical insight. He is full of the common-sense which accompanies the highest critical faculty. While Zola expended a vast amount of power in depicting and stating the obvious, Anatole France uses the obvious as a frame in which to set a fine picture. He knows how to be witty and wise for divers minds—Zola for a much larger class with limited minds. The energy displayed in *L'Assommoir* is that of the thunder-storm. We know exactly where we are going before we read many chapters: the clouds are black, the atmosphere sultry, and we look for thunder and lightning. In the beginning of the book we witness a terrific battle between washerwomen who have muscles like prize-fighters. The sensitive reader feels like holding his head between his hands and shouting, like Macbeth: "I'll see no more!"

## 138 THE MAKING OF BOOKS

We move on steadily after this into an element of blind passion and delirium tremens. Now, in depicting scenes of pugilism and delirium tremens the one thing needed is puissance ; the things which are not needed are delicacy, poetic nuance, a high standard of taste. Emile Zola expresses physical energy, Anatole France intellectual force. And it would be idle to deny that a two-column newspaper dialogue of M. Bergeret produces a better effect on the minds of critical readers than a whole book by Zola. Such is the difference between these two authors, living in the same city and writing in the same language.

Art is common-sense made beautiful. The miracle of the idealisation of the revolting has not yet been produced. Anatole France expresses with the pen what the great artists express with the brush and the chisel ; and if the Marquise de Sévigné were living now she would certainly exclaim : " Ah ! l'aimable homme que Monsieur Bergeret ! "

In the making of books it is necessary to consider the two kinds of books which usually attain success : the works which are

written in and for a certain city or country, and those which rise above the local idea. The former are the first to be neglected in the march of time. The local environment changes much more rapidly than the national; the national more rapidly than the universal. So rapidly do local conditions and appearances change in our age that it is possible for a successful book to become old-fashioned in the space of five years. Is there, indeed, a popular work of to-day which will be read a hundred years hence? There will be ten times as many good books written about persons and events of the time which people will be compelled to read, and the want of time will prevent scores of good books from being talked about. But if the ordinary changes of scene and sentiment were not enough to kill thousands of books, the changes created by science would do so. When every one can have plenty of adventure in cheap and easy travel, think and speak in two or three languages, see and hear by personal experience, much reading can be dispensed with. Experience will put an end to the superfluous in literature. When the world opens before the masses like a panorama, ever varying

and palpitating with vivid scenes and pleasant emotions, when millions of people can go from one end of the globe to another in a week or two, provincial prejudice will give place to a sentiment of broad and cosmopolitan culture.

## FEELING AND INTELLECT

“Great thoughts come from the heart.”

VAUVENARGUES.

IN vain do we place scientific inventions on a level with the sentiments that spring from the heart and soul; in vain do we try to believe that men work hard for the sake of mere business. There is more force in the social instinct than there is in intellectual detachment. Many men who appear heartless are secretly working for some one else. If the callous were placed in power all government would come to an end; relations and friends would count for nothing; the world would return to barbarism. Men would be contented with a gourd and a goatskin, a cave to sleep in, and a wilderness to wander about in. The deeper men feel, the more harmonious does civilisation become. All



inspiration springs from the heart. Art without emotion and passion is a dead thing, and so is science. Newton and Darwin were great because of the depth of their feeling. Scientific inventions and discoveries, in themselves, are trivial; they are of real value the moment they become useful; and they are useful the moment they make life more tolerable. The telegraph is of value because it makes absent ones appear less distant and the world less cold and formal. So, directly or indirectly, every great thought springs from the heart. The higher a man goes in the regions of the purely intellectual, the less useful he becomes; the more detached, the less sociable. In one word, the farther we go from the human, the more attenuated do our ideas become.

Superficial sentiment is without vital influence. The secret of power lies in the intensity of emotion; but especially so in poetry, art, and literature. By no hocus-pocus can artists and writers adequately depict what they do not feel. There should be a thermometer of temperament as well as for temperature; feeling and emotion have their degrees. We are serene when our

feelings are in the temperate zone, indignant when we pass eighty-three, furious when we reach blood-heat, mad at boiling point. When feeling falls below fifty we become indifferent, and when it reaches freezing point we are heartless. An emotion that does not attain the seventy-sixth degree is hardly worth recording. At summer heat the rarest flowers begin to bloom, and Nature becomes poetic. While the temperate is the proper sphere for pure reason and scientific observation, it is rarely, if ever, proper for the highest achievement in any art. In the world of art, imagination and feeling are not content with a serenity that touches the borders of indifference. The creative instinct is never effective unless at a certain pitch of enthusiasm. It is the sharp, clear, brilliant current of thought that electrifies the brain. But an idea is worthless unless we can find a form to hold it. In the best work, idea, form, and feeling appear to the beholder as one. An electric bolt seems a cold thing, yet a stroke of lightning will consume more at one flash than an ordinary fire would consume in an hour.

- To the superficial, some of the greatest

aphorisms seem like platitudes because they look so simple ; but some sayings that appear easy are the most difficult, owing to the extraordinary depth required to discover them. Vauvenargues, who declared that great thoughts come from the heart, knew very well what he was saying, and why. Writers of platitudes never have any abiding influence, a platitude being the utterance of a person who is incapable of feeling profoundly. And a man's impressions are not necessarily his thoughts. If Vauvenargues had scribbled mere impressions, his aphorisms might have passed for platitudes ; but he arrived at his convictions through something more than indefinable impressions. The longer I live the less I esteem work that is purely intellectual. In the history of great writers and artists the head has been the servant of the heart. Take any man or woman known to the public, in any capacity, from playing a violin to preaching a sermon, and then judge between the power of intellect and the power of feeling. Take any art, from sculpture to poetry, music, painting, oratory, and story-telling, compare the work of one man with that of another, and then

judge. Put your finger blindly on any of the arts, and choose a subject—for it matters not where you may begin. Is it poetry? Everyone must know why Virgil and Dante hold their own after the lapse of ages. Is it music? Competent judges know why Mozart, Beethoven, and Wagner are preferred to composers like Brahms. Is it novel writing? Dickens has had, and is still having, more influence than Thackeray, in spite of the latter's keen wit and original power. As for Charlotte Brontë, emotional energy made her a unique personality among novelists, as the same energy has made Signora Duse a unique personality among the figures of the stage. Never, perhaps, has spontaneity and feeling, in the actor's art, been put to such a crucial test as when Signora Duse made her first bow before a Parisian audience. She appeared before the spectators in the simplicity of her own personality—unaided by the academical arts of elocution and traditional convention—as one who had come to pay an indifferent visit, simple beyond all theatrical custom, with an expression that made her look unconcerned with the people about her. But she was

## 146 FEELING AND INTELLECT

being scrutinised by an audience composed of actors, critics, and the leaders of the titled and fashionable world—an audience representing the most critical and fastidious portion of the most intellectual society of Europe : habitués who remembered Rachel, dramatic critics who saw the début of Bernhardt, artists who had painted the portraits of geniuses, poets acquainted with the deepest emotions of the soul, psychologists who had dissected the heart in novels and romances, and, last of all, the women of fashion, supposed to be proof against the impulses of feeling. What could a simple actress like this do here? The critics felt uneasy, the fashionable women began to feel bored. But, as the play proceeded, Duse rose from her seat; she engaged in a dialogue : it was like someone speaking, not from a written text, but in actual life. For this woman was representing, not a school of art, but the soul of art ; not a method of acting, but her own mood ; not a dramatic pose, but a living passion. As the critical moment approaches, surprise changes to anxious wonder ; the amateurish actress has been transformed ; a thrill passes over the

audience—it sweeps through nerve and heart as the autumn winds through the oak and elm, stripping them of the last dry leaves of semblance and illusion. Her acting was like a resurrection of the heart from the tomb of dramatic conventionality. It came as Jew in the stifling atmosphere of classicism, as warm blood in the formal body of pedantry.

In any form of literature imagination, without deep feeling, brings us into the clouds. Some writers seem to have long and narrow brains, giving them narrow views about everything. Others seem to have broad and deep brains, and their sentiments and views are large and profound. Others, again, inhabit the seventh floor of intellect—we never walk in to see them, we take a lift and go up; we visit them by a process of mechanics and metaphysics—but we are glad to get back, even by sliding down the balustrade. Some men live with the world, some in it but not of it, and some on it but not for it. But all great writers have, by some process, known the world. The secret of Sir Walter Scott's power lies in three things: imagination, knowledge, and feeling. But without feeling, imagination

## 148 FEELING AND INTELLECT

and knowledge would have left him a novelist of the second or third order. All the greatest writers owe their power to the concentration of energy in feeling. Milton says that imagination and passion constitute the poet ; the same definition holds good for the others. Scott, Balzac, Flaubert, Hawthorne, Meredith, Hardy, George Eliot, and twenty others, prove to us how futile would have been their imagination without deep emotional power. In vain do pedantic writers try to draw a line between the best prose and the best poetry, for the line exists only by rule, and the feelings recognise none.

If such a thing were possible to invent, a psychometer would be a useful thing for measuring the height and depth of thought and feeling. As in the science of meteorology the weather expert has to consider more than one atmospheric condition before he makes a prediction, so it is of vital interest to know how far above and how far beneath the surface a writer or a speaker can go. In every sphere of art the things most essential are altitude for vision and depth for emotion. Sometimes the speaker or writer attains both height and depth in a few periods : the eye,

the ear, and the soul are affected as by the passing of a procession of heroes, with the sound of a great bell and the thunder of distant cannon. The words and phrases assume the character of a guard of honour that conducts the mind to a seat among the immortals. Once in a long while an occasion presents itself when it requires a child of Nature to speak for Nature ; once in an age the occasion and the orator arise as one. Lincoln, at Gettysburg, unified thought and feeling in a single embrace ; by a few simple gestures he conciliated defeat and victory, evoking in a brief space the mysterious harmonies that dwell on the borders of life and death ; by an exalted union of heart and intellect he spread the mantle of glory over the dead and the memory of genius over the living. Here, the rail-splitter of the prairies took his place beside Shakespeare the actor and Burns the ploughman. These names are typical examples of the heights and depths attained by Nature left to herself.



## MEMORABLE EXPRESSIONS

“Genius, like love and beauty, is a pledge of divinity and the everlasting.”—LIONEL JOHNSON.

FOUR things are usually found in memorable expressions: a clear idea, a deep sentiment, the right words, and a rhythmic arrangement of words. Some expressions appeal to the intellect alone, and, while they illuminate, they lack the quality of psychic diffusion. There are sayings which stand out like marble statues in a pantheon of brick and clay, as when Emerson, in a singularly inadequate study of Goethe, has this illuminating flash: “Goethe was a literary astrologer who never applied himself to any task but at the happy moment when all the stars consented.” There the sage of Concord not only touches on one of the secrets of Goethe’s genius, but the principal secret of all well-balanced genius.

Nevertheless, the sayings which impress the intellect are never so potent as those that impress the soul. Poetry attenuates feeling, and in this medium imagination often takes precedence of sentiment, and thought is apt to become metaphysical. The charm of prose lies, first, in its power over intimate physical things, second, in its power to fuse the material with the spiritual, as in Lafcadio Hearn's description of a statue of the Empress Josephine in one of the islands of the West Indies: "Over violet space of summer sea, through the vast splendour of azure light, she is looking back to the place of her birth." It would be impossible to add one word to this picture without marring the effect.

Writing of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, Francis Thompson alludes to a poetic world "where the very grass is all a-rustle with lovely spirit-things, and a weeping mist of music fills the air"; which is one more proof that it takes a genius to deal adequately with genius. How tame, after writing like this, is the prose of people who sit in easy chairs and moralise about the intellectual meanings of the poets!

It is impossible to attain the heights of the great poets by magpie flights round the base

## 152 MEMORABLE EXPRESSIONS

of Mount Parnassus. In speaking of the great we must soar or flutter, sing as a nightingale or chirp as a sparrow, for there is no half-way house on Parnassus. Macaulay's essay on Milton is but a magpie chattering on the rim of Paradise; the discourse of Matthew Arnold, on the same poet, the effort of a sparrow-hawk trying to follow the condor. After Macaulay's effort Milton descends from the sacred mount and becomes a denizen of the foot-hills. What is imperative is enthusiasm and imagination, and even now we are far from attaining the splendours of the dazzling empyrean of poetry; with enthusiasm and imagination, penetration and vision are essential; the writer must cease talking and begin to create; he must depict instead of explain, open the windows of the mind and let the soul look out on the radiance of Eternity. But it would seem that praise requires greater and rarer qualities than denial, for it is more difficult to build than to tear down.

Felicitous writers are the happy minds whose pulse beats to the full measure of the fullest life, the intellectual aristocrats who seal their work with bands of gold and starry

## MEMORABLE EXPRESSIONS 153

crowns. They alone are quoted by posterity. The smiling faces are always welcome, the perpetual frown brings with it failure and infelicity. How many interesting books, well-written essays, brilliant pages, are without a single passage that clings to the mind ! The reason is that in literature there are two kinds of power : one pertains to ordinary vitality, and the other to what Goethe has called *intrinsic vitality*, the first belongs more to the blood, the nerves, the wit, the will ; the second belongs to vision—it is clear-seeing, accompanied by clear understanding. Youth receives and gives the most vivid impressions, age the most intrinsic sentiments. Fénelon, on hearing of the tragic death of his pupil, the Dauphin, wrote to the Duc de Chevreuse : “ Je suis saisi d’horreur et malade de saisissement sans maladie,” a line in which soul and body speak as one, as in Æschylus or Shakespeare ; a physical fact is explained as having been produced by an emotional state of the soul.

A similar psychological state is described by Flaubert when he says of Emma Bovary “ His voice, at first feeble and quavering, became acute ; it trailed in the night like

## 154 MEMORABLE EXPRESSIONS

the indistinct lamentation of a vague distress, and, in the midst of the sound of the horses' bells, the murmur of the trees, and the rumbling of the hollow coach, it had something remote which agitated and troubled Emma. It descended to the depths of the soul like a whirlwind in an abyss and carried her into regions of melancholy without bounds or limit."

There is something miraculous in phrases compounded of imagination, energy, and precision; they possess an aura of their own that makes them loom above the utilitarian bee-hives of literature like mountains of perennial suggestiveness. Memorable expressions have their degrees, and a great gulf separates the witty and the worldly from the exalted and the transcendental. For instance, Madame Roland, on the scaffold, asking in vain for writing materials that she might record her last thoughts! How is it possible to put into words the bewildering sensations of that incommensurable moment? And yet Goethe has summed it up in one line—it is a pity, he says, that her request was not granted, for at such a time her thoughts must have been "like blessed

## MEMORABLE EXPRESSIONS 155

angels alighting with shining wings on the summits of the past."

It is the vision that creates the vision. Indeed, in the eyes of the discriminating, nothing short of this will satisfy. The sound of a great bell is smothered in the clamour of a multitude, and it is the gongs people hear when they complain of a paucity of great contemporary voices.

Expressions are not memorable because they state a fact or a truth; we are always doing and saying the old things over again, but the manner is everything, for it can put the old truths in a new dress, and the moment this is done they become possessed of a new power and a new meaning. It is the form that is eternally renewed, not the principle, the arrangement of words and not the words themselves, the combination of thought, sentiment, and manner which creates the imperishable charm. In no other way is it possible for simple sayings and definitions to become veritable creations. Ordinary things become metamorphosed when they are handled by minds gifted with the creative instinct. Things that are seen by the crowd every day lose all relation to

## 156 MEMORABLE EXPRESSIONS

the commonplace when a creative mind puts the odds and ends together and turns them into a picture with a double meaning, as when D'Annunzio says: "The sails of the sea were as pious and numberless as the wings of cherubim on the gold grounds of old Giottesque panels."

In the finest literary expressions there is something dual, something human and superhuman, and every memorable expression is a creation by itself.

In the presence of such a power, philosophy is impotent and moralising futile. The ascendancy of expressions that come into being invested with form, soul, and substance belong to the supernormal, and their influence is universal and perennial.

## IMPRESSIONISM

EMOTIONS are the arteries through which art is infused into the intellect. An impression is induced by sensation and feeling. Writers who reason the most charm the least, and they often express disappointment that the world remains indifferent to their efforts to illuminate. Bacon tells us how to make a garden, but gives no hint at the romance, the mystery, and the meaning of flowers. He gives us no impressions created by beauty, but rather seeks to create impressions by rules. In the scientific world this will do; in the world of art failure is the usual result. The things which cannot be reasoned away are the things which possess the deepest meaning and the greatest charm. And yet there are writers who reason about things with



scientific clarity while still maintaining the unity of poetic illusion. They are not dominated but enlightened by the spirit of science.

A personal view is the only excuse for any impression. All the great impressionists have seen and felt life in different combinations of colour and sensation. Goethe saw life as an artist-philosopher, Chateaubriand as a practical dreamer, Bourget as a critical psychologist, Pierre Loti as an agnostic dreamer, Edgar Poe as a dream-philosopher, Lafcadio Hearn as a Buddhist poet, Walt Whitman as a poetic socialist, De Quincey as a poetic scholar, Ruskin as an art-impressionist. In transcribing his impressions of the artistic work of others Ruskin gave pleasure to thousands of his readers who were left indifferent to his opinions on other subjects.

An impression may leave one indifferent, but it does not offend as opinions are certain to do. If we consider the cause of our opinions we shall not be long in discovering the difference between the impressions created by beautiful things and our didactic notions concerning their utility. Take ten educated men and they

may hold ten different opinions about a question of politics or philosophy ; take ten men of culture and they will agree fairly well on the merits of a page of impressional work. Opinions are liable to clash even among people of the highest attainments. Plato declared that ideas rule the world. An idea can come to us without any sensation, but sensation means feeling as well. When contemporary French writers use the words "impression" and "sensation" they use the only proper expressions to denote the feeling of the literary artist. Impression, sensation, and feeling are all there is of art and poetry. Great art is impression put into form. Writers do this by words, artists by colours, musicians by sounds, poets by rhyme and rhythm. Life is composed of a long series of sensations, superficial or profound, according to the temperament of the individual, and the more pronounced the temperament the more powerful the impact of impression. We do not reason about our sensations and impressions until after the impact, and we do not criticise our work until it begins to take form. As a rule, the sooner our impressions are put into form the better the art,

but if the work embodies a symbolised philosophy, such as we see in Goethe's *Faust*, it can only be accomplished by the slow recording of impressions and sensations, the whole forming a congruous presentation of varying moods and feelings. Now, the general idea of a work may arrive without any impression, for an idea in itself is as cold and impersonal as a mathematical principle; but we can decorate an idea with impressions as we decorate tables with flowers.

It is the business of the thinker to find ideas, it is the privilege of the artist to record his impressions, and the impressions, if they possess real value, must be personal. Many accomplished writers fail to achieve that personal quality which convinces and compels. Perhaps they fear to record their intimate impressions, or the feeling which animates them never goes very deep, or they try to attain the impossible by imitating a model. There is nothing so fatal as imitation. It means that the imitator is receiving his sensations at second hand: some man of genius has partaken of a banquet and someone else is now trying to make a feast of the remnants. The original

writer had it steaming hot from the fire ; the man that follows finds the meat cold, the champagne stale and lukewarm. The charm of any writer, living or dead, lies in the expression of his feelings, moods, and sensations. The true impressionist does not stop to consider what others have said about Rome, Egypt, the sea, the desert, the mountains, forests, and plains ; they care not, since they are not seeing the world through other people's eyes. A writer arrives in Rome with a guide-book, his head filled with the Roman impressions of Goethe or Chateaubriand, and the result is unconscious plagiarism, repetition, and imitation. The worth of any impression depends upon its depth and originality.

If deep feeling goes with vivid impressions, imagination has a large share in their making, for there seems a close relation between imagination and feeling, and very little between what is called sentimentality and impressionism. The greatest impressionists feel the force of sentiment while avoiding the sentimental, but the rule of impressions is more apparent and more general, for the reason that all men live more or less under

their sway, while only philosophers and scientists are dominated by ideas.

It is known that several minds may receive the same idea at the same time, but the feeling inspired by art or scenery renders it imperative that its expression be personal if the description is to possess any charm. The eye must see for itself, the ear must hear, the senses must act together, free and independent, to produce a chapter worth recording. There must be no fear of this or that authority, for no man can sit in authority over another man's feelings and sensations. One may agree with the thought and opinion of another and still remain free, but when we agree with the impressions of another about any picture or landscape there is no need of recording what has already been done.

## THE CLASSICAL AND THE CRITICAL

WHAT we call a classical age is always brought to an end by a period of criticism, for it is characterised not so much by critical ability as by method, patience, and judgment. The classical requires time and careful preparation, but when it arrives its leading characteristic is not the critical but the formative faculty. About its inspiration there is something slow and formal; but the period which follows is informal and epigrammatic; it includes the art and experience of the classical, with flashes of intuitional insight into character and genius. The characteristic of this period is that of brevity and precision. Its best thinkers define, by a few lines or a few pages, both the perfection and imperfection of the classical. The

## 164 CLASSICAL AND CRITICAL

aphoristic definition is in itself the quintessential element of art. It avoids the superfluous, and arrives by a single stroke at the core of the classical, especially its weakness. It is art in its most concise form. It penetrates the darkest corners of philosophy and literature, and illumines, first, the mind of the writer, and, later, that of the reader. The period which follows the classical is of the highest importance in every branch of art and thought. A sententious and critical age cannot spring from nothing. It is as much the result of natural law as the classical was in its own time, and just as necessary.

The brain resembles a storehouse of electric forces; but there are times and seasons when the nerve batteries are inactive. An epigrammatic sentence is a flash of intellectual light in the battery of the brain.

The period which precedes the classical is an examination of conscience; the period which follows is an examination of ability. To this last belong the pronouncement of judgment and the clairvoyant vision which refuses to be led by error and

Illusion. Justice puts her scales in order, the deceits of sentiment and appearance are swept away, books of the past are weighed in the balance, for without this the dust and ashes of the classical would continue to be handed down as elements of light and truth.

The epigrammatic sentence scintillates about the dim regions of literature, and the obscure and mediocre stand out for what they are. Everything passes, except the residuum of gold which genius leaves at the bottom of the crucible.

It is the mission of an epigrammatic age to reduce to a minimum the power and influence exercised by the merely formal and respectable. The position a man has occupied in society counts for nothing in the judgment of posterity.

Nowhere is the divine law concerned with any man's view of social ethics or social position. What does concern the power divine is the aim and outcome of the work of genius. Nothing else matters. As for the thing we are pleased to call respectability, there never was a man or woman of original power who gave it serious



## 166 CLASSICAL AND CRITICAL

consideration. Spinoza polished spectacles, Shakespeare was an actor, Burns a ploughman, Lincoln a rail-splitter, Milton a despised puritan, Whitman and Stevenson bohemian adventurers. The list grows with the ages, and contains all the history worth recording.

In monotony there is neither romance nor experience. And persons are like novels: the more movement, variety, and mystery they manifest the more they interest. As we laugh at the fashions of forty years ago, so Nature, after a little time, sets at defiance all our conceits and conventions. The aphoristic puts persons and things in harmonious order. Big books written just after a classical age never have the vitality of big books written during a period of classicism. The collective mind has turned, by a law of reaction, from the long to the short, from elaborate systems to brief sentences, from philosophical tomes to trenchant epigrams. A classical age is an age of thunder; the aphoristic is one of lightning. We know the clouds will presently rumble, but no one can tell when and where the electric bolt will fall. Scholar-

ship and patience make the success of many a big book ; but such success is certain to prove ephemeral. Perennial interest is created by a combination of imagination and intuition, without which there can be no penetrating wit, no humorous insight, no keen, brief analysis. We remember nothing that wearies. The exposition of truth in a handsome frame is more effective than truth plain and unvarnished.

I seek the soul of an author in two things : the aphorism and the descriptive passage. The sayings of Mrs. Poyser represent George Eliot's wit, but her soul is disclosed in the short aphorisms scattered here and there in *Adam Bede*, *Middlemarch*, and *Daniel Deronda*. The character-drawing in novels means but the wit, the sentiments, and the emotions of the author. The plot, once disclosed, loses its fascination, while the personal expressions of the author remain as a delight for ever.

"Were all books reduced to their quintessence," says Addison, "the works of an age would be reduced to a few shelves, not to mention millions of volumes that would be utterly annihilated."

## 168 CLASSICAL AND CRITICAL

The great stories, whether long or short, are as frames to the aphoristic wisdom of the writer; the action and incident are the varnish through which the emotional colours appear more limpid and transparent.

## MYSTERY AND ILLUSION

THE things that can be divined and explained away are not mysteries but secrets, the things which come with the newspaper in the morning and pass with the tea-cup in the evening. What passes beyond the wit of the most experienced, and attains the realm of perennial magic, is the inexplicable. This is why genius is always a wonder and a mystery. Secrets can be manufactured, guessed at, fathomed ; reputations may, for a time, be bolstered up on the sensations created by revealed or half-revealed secrets ; but there is as much difference between secrets and mysteries as there is between talent and genius.

The publican and the postman can talk of a secret with some degree of intelligence ; they cannot intelligently discuss a mystery.

## 170 MYSTERY AND ILLUSION

And in this the poet is not much better off than the publican; the poet knows that secrets are finite sensations and mysteries infinite realities; and the poet stops there. Secrets cease to interest once we have understood. Approach a mystery and it recedes into higher regions. It is always on the wing. Newton revealed a secret of Nature and made it plain, but he did not touch the mystery behind the secret. The mysteries of Nature and human nature are alike perennial. Look anywhere in the world of Art and you will find plenty of revelations, revealed facts, but not one of them touches so much as the hem of the real personality. Chatterton's literary forgery was a secret revealed, but not a revelation of his genius. There are illusions which pertain to secrets, and when the secret is out the illusion is gone for ever.

Of the three magical things known to man—genius, personal beauty, and spiritual serenity—perhaps the last is the most potent and the most personal in its influence. Other virtues and qualities may change, suddenly or by degrees. Beauty may fade in a night, genius has its moods of action

and reaction, activity and indifference, but a serene spirit carries its own light, is a sort of magical beacon on the shores of the ever-present now. I have met with two kinds of serenity: one the gift of heredity; the other the gift of prolonged tribulation; there is a third, the result of inborn goodness, strengthened and brightened by the going and coming of a thousand illusions, those phantoms that elude the sentinels at the threshold of reason. They glide into our lives without noise or warning, inhabit the secret corners of the mind for months or years, and then glide away as silently as they came.

There are illusions which refuse to be discarded as we discard an old garment; they pass from us in their own time, like coffins laden with the souvenirs of the past, leaving us stricken and wondering on the brink of inscrutable mystery, dumb amidst the chimeras and unsolved enigmas of the universe.

It is through the gate of illusion that most of us attain the fairest glimpses of the Eden of serenity. Illusions are the fretwork of the house of life, the belfry of sounds and

## 172 MYSTERY AND ILLUSION

symbols, but from the altar within the incense rises that purifies and renders acceptable the sacrifice of so many years and so many sorrows. Some illusions rule us like invisible tyrants, and when they depart others arrive in new guises, in the form of friends, to remain as flatterers, and leave with mysterious abruptness; other illusions arrive in the guise of visions and dreams, with vistas that have no end, with multitudinous forms, like the mirage that is always just beyond.

It is the law, for dreams must precede realities. They accompany every temperament, from the most humble to the most exalted.

The woods and fields are among the few places where the mind is serene and free from illusive deceptions. The woods, hills, stars, streams, and plains, are impersonal. A tree does not disappoint us when its leaves begin to fall, nor a flower when it begins to wither and fade. We know them as realities that change their appearance at fixed periods; they belong to the poetic in Nature, and their souvenirs are connecting links that stretch from month to month and from year

to year. It is when we enter the world of man that chimeras and illusions seem disturbing, menacing, afflicting, and deadly. Here, and here only, do things and people disturb and deceive. Delusions are fixed deceptions, but illusions are related to time, season, circumstance, health, social modes and intellectual moods, antipathy or sympathy. While to the uncultured mind everything deludes, to the philosopher and poet everything is illusive in the sense that realities lie far hidden under the shifting lights and shadows of sight and sentiment, and only those who are possessed of the inner conception of truth can sift the gold from the glittering chaff. Through what seas must we wade before we wander back towards the mountain that separates two desolations!

The ambitious and fretful are harassed by that bitter cry, "To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow," for the poet knew the illusions of to-morrow would be the same in kind if not in degree, the same in substance if not in appearance, as those of to-day. The madding dream would go on, but the scenes would shift—the same drama with



## 174 MYSTERY AND ILLUSION

fresh incidents, the same theme with new subjects. It has to be conceded that to the ignorant and superstitious everything tricks and deludes ; to them, people and things are all so many mechanical deceptions, and genius itself is a device the secret of which may be discovered and appropriated.

Happiness depends on being able to sift the things that glimmer and deceive from the things that are simple, real, and fixed. The habit of pessimism is assumed when we allow middle age to arrive and find us still under the domination of illusions springing from negative ideals, impossible ambitions, vain and impotent enthusiasms. The wise are those who know exactly the worth and duration of ephemeral joys, and so prepare in advance for every onslaught of disillusionment. The pessimist takes the trivial and fleeting things of life as if they were intended to remain as perpetual realities instead of passing incidents, and he is apt to draw from reason and experience a stoical serenity which is often more sad than joyful and consoling. Goethe was more serene than Marcus Aurelius ; Emerson more secure than Seneca ; while anger and philosophical agitation pre-

vented Carlyle from entering the precincts of perpetual magic. Indeed, this magic is more a state of being than a feeling of superiority ; it implies a superior existence more than superior knowledge. It is not the will that acts, but life itself.

Just as the most dangerous illusions are those which give no hint of their chimerical nature, the serenity attained by a constant exercise of the will is the most wavering and insecure. In the manifold garden of life illusions are the butterflies and weeds, and serenity the flower that blooms the latest and lasts the longest.

## ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY

ART, in its highest form, is that quality which springs from a union of imagination, feeling, and reason. This quality has never been inactive in the world at any period since civilisation began. The greatest epochs in history were art-epochs: Athens under Pericles, Rome under Augustus, Florence under Lorenzo the Magnificent, England under Elizabeth and Victoria, France under Louis XIV. and Louis Philippe. To go back to the Hebrews, Jerusalem became an art-centre under the poets David and Solomon; but while the Temple, with all its splendour and riches, has disappeared, the works of the two poets remain. The most enduring art is that embodied in words, for the decline of literature implies the decline of all the other arts. All through the Middle

## ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY 177

Ages art found expression in two channels: in the mystic and in the romantic—saints in religion, troubadours in poetry and song. Learned and inspired monks dreamed life away in the monasteries; knights errant roamed the world seeking adventure; mystery, war, romance, and religion, worked together to bring about the Renaissance in which the old arts were to be revived and many new ones unfolded. In one sense the Middle Ages was a period of free and untrammelled inspiration. The art of the troubadour was expressed by improvisation; with Dante it became concrete and assumed new and measured forms to express the old and eternal principles. In the Middle Ages scholasticism took the place of science, but it did not kill the art instinct; neither did the words over Plato's door, "Let no man enter who is ignorant of geometry," for these words could have had no literal meaning for anyone except the philosopher and the dialectician. Poets and composers are not always conscious of the mathematical order which underlies the measure and harmony of their work. But philosophy can exist without art, and although Plato was a great

## 178 ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY

artist in words, it was not philosophy that made him so, but the artistic faculty with which he was born. Systems of philosophy pass away in time, while the works of art remain, to become more precious as the ages come and go. A philosophical system may be full of error, but art rises above the disputations of philosophical schools and the innovations of time. Contrast the effect of the scientific discourse you heard yesterday evening with the effect produced by an artistic performance in the same hall this evening. The speaker of yesterday was a distinguished scientist, the performer of this evening was an unlettered boy with an unpronounceable name, but he managed his violin with the skill of a master of expression. He cast a spell over the audience, which the scientist could not do. The scientific discourse gave instruction, but the performance of a simple virtuoso gave not only instruction but a spiritual pleasure and that indefinable feeling that comes from the mystery and the magic of art, even in an imitational form. For even a violinist must know what he is doing ; he must be sure of his technique and know how to express feeling and awaken it in

## ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY 179

others. Philosophers and scientists have to impart knowledge by detailed explanation; the process is often uninteresting, but in art everything has a charm peculiar to itself. An influence is poured forth from the creative mood which is superior to philosophy and intellectual research. "What avails the analytical method," says Goethe, "if we do nothing more than busy ourselves with the separate materials of which it is composed while we are unmoved by the spirit which pervades it?" The knowledge derived from the anatomical, the rhetorical, and the analytic is, in many cases, a knowledge that does more harm than good, for it often represses originality.

Men of talent are usually taught what it is not necessary for them to know, while the others are taught what Nature never intended them to understand. When a man of genius passes from the college into the freedom of the world he finds that he has just begun life; he has to find out what he can do best, and, in some cases, this requires years of weary effort. Perhaps the vainest work for the creative mind is the reading of books devoted to the psychology of human thought

## 180 ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY

and feeling. Art is neither embellished nor developed by this study; the scientist, the philosopher, who has explained away the secret workings of the mind, the nerves, the passions, is bound by the same laws of Nature as the artist who creates by an emotional process. Schopenhauer, who wrote the greatest work on love that was ever written, fell a victim to the passion of love, and Sully Prudhomme has told us how easy it is for a beautiful woman to lead a philosopher by the nose. We are led by what is stronger than ourselves, and this is not science, but beauty, which is art. We are influenced more by the artistic than we are by the scientific, and in this age of analysis it is well to reiterate the fact. All the science in the world will not save us from the inevitable, from that inexorable supremacy exercised by beauty in all its forms, personal and impersonal, material and spiritual.

While there can be no creative art without imagination, facile imagery entices a rapid flow of work which is one of the most serious stumbling-blocks in the path of talent. If we consider painters at their work we have

## ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY 181

to consider the model posing before them. It is, at first, difficult to see what use the creative imagination can have for a model ; but the model sitting before a painter is what grammar is to the writer, arithmetic to the man of business, the plans of the architect for the workman. By the model the painter's art becomes exact and definite. He must harmonise the fantasy of the mind with the figure of reality. Every creation of the mind is a work of art when it expresses the unity of the laws of beauty. Music is an expression of harmonious movements and sounds, painting an expression of harmonious colours and forms, architecture of proportion and perspective, but literature embodies all these and more. The artist in words must achieve proportion with the architect, colour with the painter, rhythm with the musician, and imagination with the poet. Words are intended to present, as well as to explain, principles and things. The art of language explains all the other arts, but no art can explain language. The artist in words rightly takes precedence of all others ; he must know more than the architect, the sculptor, the musician, or the painter. Writers and poets



## 182 ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY

in their supreme moments embody in a short period of time the principles and aspirations underlying all the plastic arts. The world has unconsciously accepted this fact, for it has always paid the greatest honours to the verbal artist. I have often asked why a fine piece of music does not awaken in the listener a desire to see and hear the composer. People enjoy an opera as a thing apart from the individuality of the composer; and melody, although conceived according to law, is the least-reasoned thing in the realm of art. A melody is so impersonal that it may be appropriated by the people of different nations without anyone caring to know the name of the composer.

Architecture is another phase of art which appeals to the impersonal. We gaze at beautiful structures as we do at mountains. The beauty of a Gothic cathedral, however, is more apparent than that of a Grecian temple: the first strikes the eye by its majesty and power; the second by its repose and harmony. The Gothic cathedral looks more complex, but the simplicity of the Grecian temple requires more art to produce. In

## ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY 183

the Middle Ages art was dominated by imagination, but in ancient Greece it meant beauty and symmetry. And symmetry demands measure, proportion, in which the form assumes the perfection and simplicity of a natural law. A fine Gothic cathedral gives the impression of a picture in a dream—something that does not belong to natural life; while a Greek temple gives the impression of something that pertains to Nature; in it imagination is subdued and adjusted to the requirements of art in its purest form. To most people Grecian architecture appears too simple to be imposing. The modern mind looks for towers and spires, high colours, sensational scenes, things that protrude on the sight and impress the imagination. The English language is Gothic—like English poetry and English cathedrals—and for this reason we are more given to change and sensation in our language than the writers of the Latin nations. A cathedral symbolises art; yet see what words will do: its splendid colours, its mystery and pomp, its organ harmonies, all fade away when a Bossuet appears in the pulpit and, by the harmony of language, unifies all the other

## 184 ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY

arts in his own person. The gorgeous colours, the sculptured pillars, the waves of music, the clouds of incense, the mystery of symbols, everything in sense and sound is unfolded in his ideas and imagination. Here, in the temple of religion and art, his own art dominates all the others. The pulpit is the throne in which the orator-poet presides, speaking for all the ~~the~~ muses. He is action, gesture, expression, rhythm, and reason. The art of Demosthenes treats of time and action, that of Bossuet time and eternity. With him, the arts were united in one body. Under such a combination of harmonies the achievement appears to the eye as a fascination, to the reason as a natural charm—like a flower or a sunset, to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be taken away.

All the arts are in some way related. Even in the art of war a competent commander is a military architect—he draws his plans. A general who is not an artist is one who imitates the methods of successful captains without knowing why. A great commander represents an epic in action. He has to move from one event to another

,—to form plans of defence, of attack and retreat ; and when his manœuvres have failed he has to decorate the face of confusion by rhetorical devices. He becomes an orator in speech and an actor in gesture and attitude. No wonder the ancients mistook the Alexanders and the Cæsars for descended gods. None of the great generals depended on guess-work to ~~win~~ a battle ; they were all, from Alexander to Condé, from Bonaparte to Moltke, men who meditated, planned, rejected, and re-planned before going into action. Art unifies the faculties of thought and feeling. But the scientist must be a specialist ; it is the mission of every scientist to make discoveries, which are taken up and enlarged upon by other scientists ; but every new discovery tends to obliterate the old ones. Not so with art. All the consummate works of art retain the old power and charm. The scientist says to his pupils, "Continue my work when I am gone" ; and the pupils continue the master's work until it no longer resembles the work of the master. No great artist could expect a disciple to finish his work. When Virgil died his style and personality went with him ; and when

## 186 ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY

Raphael passed away there was not a painter in the world who could produce a pendant to the "Sistine Madonna." Aristotle was a great and wonderful mind, but his work was preparatory and unfinished because it assumed a scientific form. Others could proceed from the point where he left off and show where he was wrong ; but no one could add another pillar to the Parthenon, or a chapter to the Book of Job. Aristotle fumbled with the alphabet of Nature, while the Hebrew poets and the Greek artists made it unfold the eternal verities in symbols and images. The highest art cannot exist without the unity of the principles of beauty. In science there is no special regard for beauty, but for fact, which is often repulsive. For science has to deal with the minute—things have to be classified. The scientist often possesses imagination, but he is opposed to sentiment, because it hinders the search for facts. But the combined work and thought of twenty scientists would not produce the effect of one work of supreme art, for nothing considered singly is of any permanent value. Imagination unbridled by reason means intellectual riot ; sentiment unchecked by discrimination

## ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY 187

means emotional dissipation; calculation without feeling is art without charm; the works which pass away are those in which one thing is expected to fill the place of several. This is why realism alone has always failed; while idealism, developed by and for itself, rises beyond the needs of human life, and fails by ignoring the uses of the material.

The vital power is never manifest in the fleeting things of the world, in imitation of Nature, in dramatic or sensational poses calculated to produce surprise or horror. And how vain it is to say that any artist, in any great work, hits upon an idea in the same way as he would stumble across a purse of gold in the street. Excellent work is never done by chance. Millet well knew that two peasants painted as they stood in the fields would mean nothing. In such a pose there would be no idea. The two figures had to be endowed with a sentiment, a feeling, a something superior to the physical condition of their life and their work. Now an idea is not a worked-up, patched-up thing, but is perfect in itself. The competent artist knows when he is in the presence of such

## 188 ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY

a force, and his one aim is to give it a visible form.

Ruskin has said, "An artist should be fit for the best society, and keep out of it," in which saying there is a double meaning. Society is insincere; poets, writers, and painters cannot live in it without becoming flatterers. The true artist, whether his work be plastic or poetic, has to avoid the influence both of the masses and the classes; for no great work of art was ever conceived and executed on personal grounds. And yet all creative minds have had a distinct personality of their own. It is this which gives originality to each. It is the principles involved in the artistic unities that render the work impersonal. The combination of the different principles shown by each individual temperament belongs to the person. The manner, therefore, is the man; it is that by which we distinguish the work of Balzac from the work of Flaubert; the language of Canning from that of Burke; the paintings of Raphael from those of Rubens. All that the artist can do is to represent beauty in moments of supreme harmony. Art is not assisted by audacity, but by independence;

## ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY 189

it seeks freedom of expression. Science demands moral and physical courage, imitation, and daring; art, at its best, is serene and self-confident. Science and philosophy mean progress from one fact and state to another; and there would be no good in scientific knowledge if it did not lead to something better; but science, which began in facts and figures, must continue so to the end. Meanwhile, Homer remains Homer. The supreme artists have kept their seats while the world has been shaken and society torn by political, religious, and scientific revolutions. Art is the synthesis of beauty in Nature; and beauty is as serious as death itself. In the best art there is no room for persiflage. The great orations were delivered, not to make people smile, but to make them think, by contrasting life and death, liberty and bondage, justice and tyranny. The same motive characterises the great ethics and dramas. The best comedy ever written does not equal in beauty any of the best tragedies. But if anyone doubts the seriousness of beauty let him contemplate the effect of personal beauty on the minds of young and old alike; it is one of instant gravity.



## 190 ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY

The passion it inspires brings the most frivolous to book and sobers the most inveterate humorist. It is the passion of sincerity that keeps the flame burning on the altar of art. People who take up painting, music, or literature as a pleasurable pastime never succeed. Art, beauty, and genius, are three things which permit of no trifling. The true artists are those who feel the reality of their power and the necessity for their effort, and who, as the late Lord Houghton said, do what they must, while others do what they can. For the sense of power precedes all successful efforts. Every fresh aspect of beauty comes to the world like a revelation; it reveals a new combination of harmonies. The art of an age is the highest achievement of its civilisation. Art-epochs are preceded by tyranny and fanaticism, and followed by levity and cynicism. When the sense of beauty begins to wane, people indulge in the humorous and the satirical; the sensational and the trivial then take the place of dignity and harmony. And the time comes to every nation when art is weakened by becoming popular.

The rise and decadence of any art reminds

one of the rise and decadence of the French Revolution, which was begun by the best minds and made popular by the worst. Everything excellent, from the making of a statute by a Phidias to the writing of a poem by a Tennyson or a Whitman, is aristocratic in the highest and best sense. Pericles and Augustus knew this; Lorenzo the Magnificent knew it; Louis XIV. knew it; the Gardens of Versailles were planned and planted by Lenoir, and the Court was embellished and ennobled by the great artists in colour, form, poetry, and music. But art declined in France when Voltaire began to satirise and Rousseau began to preach. The age of serenity and beauty had passed, and wit took their place; and the placid dignity of art was disturbed by the personal talk of the salon, falsely called the art of conversation. For conversation, even at its best, is, by its nature, extemporaneous, irregular, and disjointed. Wit and gossip ruled in the salons, but wit of itself has no relation to art, because in it there is neither feeling nor imagination. No one can have absolute control over conversation, and art cannot exist without a serene and reasoned harmony. The art of

## 192 ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY

conversation is not a lost art, never having existed. What we have lost is the wit and the tact of the eighteenth century. But the truth is there was something trivial in the conversation of that epoch. It had no solid basis, being like the fashions, which pass away never to return. All talk that passes rapidly from one subject to another is puerile. Ideas can never be expressed ~~by~~ witticism, grace of manner, and tact; they require time and gravity. And society, everywhere and at all times, reposes on the humours, passions, and caprices of the moment. Art, like personal beauty, is not a caprice, but a fixed reality, which cannot be dismissed by witty repartee and the graces of good humour and elegant manners. Nothing requires more time than the development of art; and society is opposed to all serious effort. I have not been able to discover an important work achieved by anyone living in the fashionable world. An artist, be he engaged with the brush or the pen, has to ignore the fashions and ambitions of society; the work done for material gain will perish in time, like everything that is insincere and artificial, but the novice has to learn in the rude

## ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY 193

,school of experience before he can appropriate the benefits of intellectual and social independence. There comes a time in the lives of all artists when the truth is made plain that living in the world does not mean being controlled or influenced by it. Society is the enemy of the natural, the mother of puerile forms and conventions, the envious opponent of ~~harmonious~~ beauty. Lovers of Nature are never contented unless surrounded by the natural—flowers, trees, and birds being the highest expression of the divine in Nature ; and it may be taken as a rule that the deeper the love of Nature in the artist the higher will be his expression of art. Sympathy, limited to one phase of life, will not suffice for the highest artistic achievement. The intelligence which is not in unison with the universal movement that embodies rhythm and form, colour and harmony, has not attained the soul of beauty. A poet is one who sees and hears and feels with Nature. He speaks for all things, animate and inanimate ; he understands, not by rule but by feeling, not by study alone but by meditation and intuition ; he absorbs and fuses all the meanings and mysteries of the world. He

## 194 ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY

sees clearly, because he feels profoundly; even his dreams are realities, because founded on things that never die. The ancients distinguished the poet from other artists by saying, *poeta nascitur non fit*; which means that he alone is not bound to systems and rules. And they were right. The highest verbal art is founded on feeling, sympathy, universal insight; and ~~these are~~ the things which usually ignore rules and systems. But when the poet depends on rhyme his inspiration is, to a certain degree, confined to a fixed rule; he has, like the painter and sculptor, to pay attention to measure and number; in which case he becomes, in the academical meaning of the word, an artist. The soul of poetry is not confined to any stated form or measure. Buffon declared, long ago, the best prose to be the best poetry; but Whitman had to unfold his panoramic word-pictures before we could believe it. This poet induces a miracle by ignoring all the rules ever accepted by preceding poets, and succeeds by sheer force of natural and spontaneous feeling. By his treatment, democracy appears large, luminous, and romantic. He achieves the artistic by ignor-

## ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY 195

ing art. Poetry, like romance, means the love of the universal. But the work of Whitman is one of the most striking instances of the failure of art to influence the people for whom it was intended. The people adore conventional art; they demand the sensational and the sentimental through conventional channels; and it requires a high degree of culture to be naive and natural. Art is the science of selection; and particularly so in the world of language. This is why no supreme art has ever appealed to the multitude. None but the highest intellects can appreciate and understand the qualities required for selection. This faculty of choosing the best is the enemy of chance work. It erases discords, rejects the mediocre, evokes and waits for the illuminating thought.

"The highest simplicity is produced," says Emerson, "not by few elements, but by the highest complexity." And if it is a rare thing to meet an educated man who knows what the highest complexity means, how can we expect the masses to understand so much? If we are wise we agree with Emerson "to give up all hope of approbation from the

## 196 ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY

people in the street." "All the human race," says the sage of Concord, "have agreed to value a man according to his power of expression." He does not mean the people of any epoch or country, but the elect judges of diverse peoples and countries. The masses, everywhere, are moved and influenced by sensation, not by art and beauty. They cannot feel what they do not understand.

How many pioneers of the New World have been able to appreciate the simplicity and sublimity of Whitman's lines?

"Has the night descended?  
Was the road of late so toilsome; did we stop, discouraged,  
nodding on our way?  
Yet a passing hour I yield you, in your tracks to  
pause oblivious,  
Pioneers! O Pioneers!

Still, with sound of trumpet,  
Far, far off the daybreak call—hark! how loud and  
clear I hear it wind,  
Swift! to the head of the army—swift, spring to your  
places,  
Pioneers! O Pioneers!"

The deep and simple expression here belongs to the naivety of genius, and all the

## ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY 197

ordinary rules of poetic art are ignored. Feeling, when expressed by a master, takes precedence of everything else. By a single bound it clears the circle of rules and becomes universal, like the atmosphere and the heavens. In these lines, as in many others of Whitman, feeling is supported and elevated by imagination. The words, "Far, far off the ~~day~~ break call," come to the mind with the freedom of romance and adventure, enthusiasm for fresh work, and an absolute trust in the future. They are full of the complexity of romance which is always simple.

Art degenerates in the atmosphere of palaces, drawing-rooms, factories, sordid and commercial communities, crowded localities and social conventions. For imagination is the mother of romance. All the great epics, from Homer to Milton and Shelley, were conceived in a spirit as vast as the universe. There are grades of merit in all work, but the supreme must be attained in the regions of the universal, and it is not difficult to tell when we are in its presence. The portraiture of a person, no matter how fine and perfect, can never equal the figure that



## 198 ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY

typifies a whole race. Michelangelo's statue of Moses assumes a universal meaning ; it is not the man we see but the whole Hebrew race—the power and splendour of the incomparable epics of the Old Testament. This is why it is a work of pure feeling and imagination ; it is the synthesis of the passion and the majesty of the people who live nearest to Nature. In art the particular is of far less interest than the general. The least interesting marbles in the Vatican are the busts of the Roman emperors, and yet these emperors lived, and many of the busts must have been copied from life. The secret of their failure to interest lies in the fact that these busts are not works of art but realistic copies of heads. We hurry past them till we come to the works which represent the human form in movement or repose, typifying the excellence and the power of beauty. The making of a bust, like the making of a portrait, belongs to the mechanical side of art, and we are singularly deceived when we place these things beside works of imagination and feeling. We have but to step from the National Gallery to the National Gallery of Portraits to realise the difference between the art that creates and

## ART, SCIENCE. AND BEAUTY 199

the art that imitates. The pleasure it gives us to gaze at the portrait of Turner is nothing compared to the sensations produced by the contemplation of one of his paintings. In literature the supreme art seems to consist in concealing personality under the charm and illusion of the artistic. When we speak plainly of our own sufferings and sorrows we are in danger of outraging some of the fundamental principles of art. We can analyse the form, the thought, the movement, the expression, but quality eludes definitions. To give an idea of the intrinsic worth of anything in art or Nature we have to get at the soul of the thing, that which is hidden under colour, form, and movement. Painters and poets can describe the form and colour of the rose, but no description can impart its perfume; to get at the quality of a page of writing we have to quote the actual words, for no description of our own would prove adequate. It is the quality of a thing that gives the value and creates the distinction, not bulk or power or passion or colour alone. Quantity does not necessarily add to the reputation of an artist. On the contrary, bulk hinders the unity of power and beauty.

## 200 ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY

Quality in a work is the quintessential character of the person who produced it. How many roses does it not take to make a small vial of the attar of roses ! There is nothing remarkable in the colour or the size of the violet, but its perfume makes it one of the most distinguished objects in the physical world.

Art, like common sense, is eternally modern. It is the power of embellishing fact ; and the great artists know how to avoid the apparent and omit the superfluous. That which distinguishes ideas from notions, and principles from prejudice, belongs to the permanent. By a concentrated effort it hides the appearance of effort ; the chaff is sifted from the pure grain by an electric process of the mind which cannot be adequately explained and cannot be imparted. Every artist has his own mode of thinking and working, which he could not impart to another were he to spend a lifetime in trying. A scientific inventor can initiate his pupils into all his methods and secrets. Schools teach people how to imitate but not how to create. They teach the scholar how to think logically, how to write with precision,

but never how to imagine and to feel. For the highest art is always accompanied by profound feeling. Without passion it will not move, without imagination it will not elevate, without the expanding harmonies it will not illuminate and influence.

Religion, as it seems, can do without art, but all supreme art is a religion in itself. It should be noted that Millet's "Angelus" expresses a high religious feeling which is in harmony with the highest expression of beauty. Without the sincere and naive sentiment in the "Angelus" the painting would fall to the level of two peasants who symbolise nothing more than the sordid work of the world. There are writers who think that art will become scientific, practical, socialistic, utilitarian; let them consider for one moment the cause of Millet's triumph. Was it the simple portrayal of two French peasants? Hundreds of other painters could have done the same. What, then, is the secret? The secret lies in the complex idea of the simple and the sublime. The prime motive here is religious — eternity opposed to time, the sublime opposed to the vulgar. The picture would be banal without the

## 202 ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY

bowed heads, the attitude and expression which unite the very soil of the material world with the soul and mystery of the universe. Nor is this all. The fact that this picture has been the one supreme success of recent times in a country of philosophical sceptics is but one more proof that work without soul can have no lasting place in the pantheon of art. The commonplace must be transformed by the magic of the artist's mind : *æternum internum*.

In art the supreme moment arrives with the unity of many harmonious influences. It is what is called the mood. Without this complex union the excellent is never attained. Everything in the world of intellect and inspiration is produced by natural means. There is no visible line between the material and the spiritual, human consciousness being only the last and highest mode of the physical ; for the laws of mind harmonise with those of all the forces known in matter. What we call psychical manifestations are not distinct from other manifestations of natural law, and we have ceased to talk and write about the "supernatural," science having rendered the word meaningless. And

for the same reason writers of intelligence no longer allude to persons of talent as "instruments" of higher powers. The higher powers are always the powers of the individual. • There are superstitions which die slowly and very hard. In poetry the word "afflatus" defines that state in which a happy combination of the necessary conditions of mind and body, weather and season, is created. Milton and Hawthorne could do no excellent work between the vernal and the autumnal equinox. Moods, impressions, inspirations, belong to the same order of law, and are practically one thing. Supreme work is done, not by method and system, but under spontaneous impulses. It is the quality, not the quantity, which contains the vital essence, the illuminating spark, the generating force; and for this reason: artists, writers, and thinkers are bound up in the same general law, no one being free to produce supreme work to order. It is impossible to predict when the magical unity of all the necessary conditions will occur. All efforts are vain unless we are aided by season, weather, health, and tranquil nerves. Indeed the state which produces

## 204<sup>3</sup>ART, SCIENCE, AND BEAUTY

inspiration combines too many elements and influences for a definite analysis, since it is composed of all those subtle conditions springing from Nature in her most delicate and complicated moods.

# PARISIAN PORTRAITS

BY

FRANCIS GRIERSON

*Fcap 8vo. 2s. 6d. net*

---

## AN APPRECIATION OF FRENCH GENIUS

---

The *Times* says.—“With one exception, these portraits are direct from life, and that not of a snatched and hasty hour, but of frequent and intimate intercourse. This gives them a value and reality beyond the reach of any mere student of their books or time; yet the most remarkable feature of Mr Grierson’s portraits is their extraordinarily clear and various detail. He not only recalls what is the most valuable essential of every real memory, the atmosphere, the emotional outlook, the general effect, but has also retained the harvest of a busy, critical, and very alert eye. . . . He aims at giving an edge to all he says. . . . His touch is light and easy, his insight sure, and his choice of subject exclusive. . . . A finished, skilful, and richly laden book.”

The *Daily Express* says:—“Amazingly clear and acute.”

The *Westminster Gazette* says:—“Living memories of famous people made unusually real by Mr Grierson’s vivacious art of writing and his premeditated frankness.”



# THE CELTIC TEMPERAMENT

BY

FRANCIS GRIERSON

*Fcap 8vo. 2s. 6d. net*

---

*CHARMING AND FULL OF WISDOM*

---

The late Professor WILLIAM JAMES said :—" I find 'The Celtic Temperament' charming and full of wisdom."

The *Glasgow Herald* says :—" A remarkable book, and by a remarkable man. . . . This book will be read and re-read by all who recognise acuteness of intellectual faculty, culture which has gained much from books, but more from human intercourse, deep thinking, and a gift of literary expression which at times is quite Gallic."

Mr MAURICE MAETERLINCK says :—" In this volume I am privileged once more to breathe the atmosphere of supreme spiritual aristocracy which emanates from all Mr Grierson's work. He has, in his best moments, that most rare gift of casting certain shafts of light, at once simple and decisive, upon questions the most difficult, obscure, and unlooked-for in art, morals, and psychology. . . . I place these essays among the most subtle and substantial that I know."

# THE VALLEY OF SHADOWS

BY

FRANCIS GRIERSON

*Demy 8vo. 6s. net*

## MEMORIES OF LINCOLN'S COUNTRY

In this book Mr Grierson recalls in vivid memories the wonderful romance of his life in Lincoln's country before the war. "*The Valley of the Shadows* is not a novel," says Mr W. L. Courtney in the *Daily Telegraph*, "yet in the graphic portraiture of spiritual and intellectual movements it possesses an attraction denied to all but the most significant kind of fiction. . . . With a wonderful touch Mr Grierson depicts scene after scene, drawing the simple, native characters with bold, impressive strokes."

"There are chapters," says *Punch*, "in the book—'The Camp Meeting' is an example of one kind, 'The Log House' of another—that haunt one afterwards like remembered music, or like passages in the prose of Pater."

# MODERN MYSTICISM

And Other Essays

By FRANCIS GRIERSON

*Fcap. 8vo. 2s. 6d. net*

---

*ORIGINAL, INCISIVE, SUBTLE, ACUTE*

---

This book embodies profound thinking expressed in an original and happy style.

Mr MAURICE MAETERLINCK says:—"This volume is full of thoughts and meditations of the very highest order. . . . Mr Grierson has concentrated his thought on the profound and simple questions of life and conscience. . . . What unique and decisive things in 'Parsifalitis,' for example, what strange clairvoyance in 'Beauty and Morals in Nature,' in the essay on 'Tolstoy,' in 'Authority and Individualism,' in 'The New Criticism'!"

Mr JAMES DOUGLAS says:—"This little book is tremulous with originality and palpitating with style."

Mr A. B. WALKLEY says:—"A delectable book. . . . I shall keep it on the same shelf as 'Wisdom and Destiny' and 'The Treasure of the Humble.'"

LONDON: STEPHEN SWIFT, 10 JOHN STREET, ADELPHI

